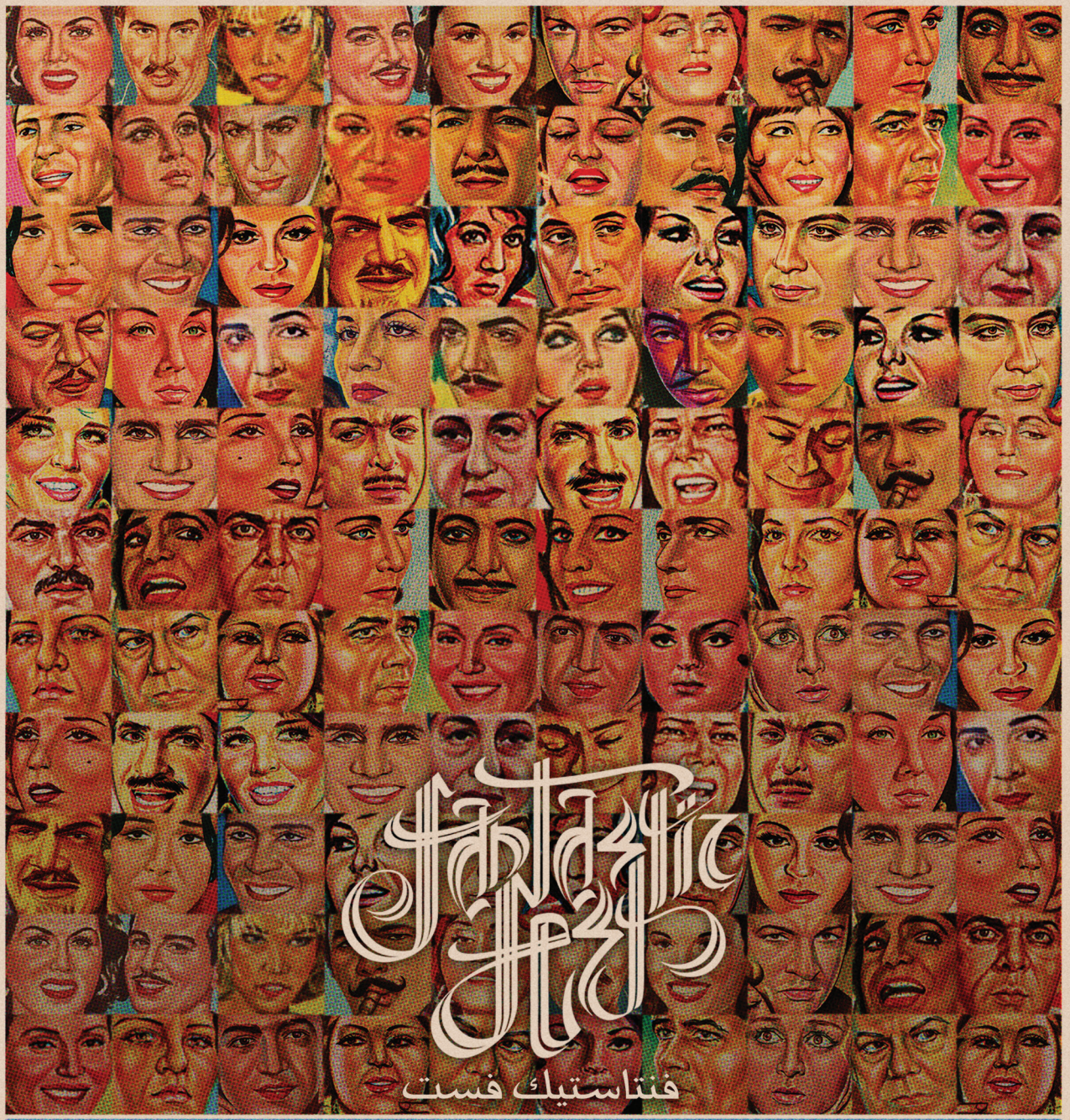


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PRESENTS

FANTASTIC FEST

SEPTEMBER 21ST-28TH | CHAOS REIGNS | AUSTIN, TX | 2017



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فنتاستيك فست

CHAOS REIGNS

It's hard to believe another year has passed and we're all about to embark on the craziest, most wonderful week of 2017. Everyone has their favorite holidays, ranging from Christmas to Halloween. But for the team at Fantastic Fest, it's festival week, that rare time that allows thousands of people from across the world to descend upon Austin and celebrate our shared love of film. And you're as much a part of it as anyone. So thank you! And WELCOME!

Creating this festival is no easy task and could not happen without the endless support of those people scattered across Austin, across America and across the world who tirelessly champion, aid and support FF. Thanks to all of you from the bottom of our hearts!

Finally, to each and every member of the team at Fantastic Fest, the lifeline of this wonderful fest: Thank you for making 2017 another triumphant year.

Now let's watch some films, witness some debates, sing some karaoke and lose ourselves in the kaleidoscopic colors of filmmaking.

Love,
FANTASTIC FEST

2017 STAFF TO THANK

Amy Averett
Andrew McEathron
Annick Mahnert
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Brad Sorenson
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Brenda Kolas
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Lamar Union
South Austin Gym
The Drafthouse Video Team
The Drafthouse South Lamar Team
The Highball Team
The Mondo Team
The Projection Team
The Volunteer Team

FANTASTIC FEATURES

In a year when the hinges of the world increasingly felt like they were about to come off, it's good to see cinema remaining a constant force, expanding our horizons, fighting for change and telling those stories that would otherwise not be heard.

The feature selection at Fantastic Fest 2017 is as wide and diverse as the global creators behind the festival, hailing from Mexico all the way to Japan. Out of thousands of submissions, we've managed to bring the selection down to what you hold in your hand right now, and it has proven a massive challenge; so many good films means an equal amount of difficult decisions. But it's a testament to the efforts of the programming team that the final selections include unique works that range from fairy tales to true stories to horror of the mind, all sitting next to each other comfortably in a program that represents, for us, the best of what's out there.

Although I don't want to pick any favorites in the introduction — our programming notes can guide you there — I would like to make one small request of you: TAKE A CHANCE. The program features so many extraordinary titles that it's my sincere belief that if you sample a film that might not have been an obvious choice, it just may end up being a favorite.

And, of course, if you love something, tell us. Tell it to the world. It is only through communication with the audience that we can constantly evolve our program for the better.

So again, welcome to Fantastic Fest 2017. These are the stories we've chosen to share. We know you'll love them as much as we do.

—Evrim Ersoy

FANTASTIC SHORTS

As you traverse the Alamo South Lamar in pursuit of fantastic films this year, always be sure to afford yourself a chance to seek out our shorter spectaculars.

Culled from a record submission pool of 1200 titles, we are thrilled to be showcasing 50 of the weirdest and wildest short films of the year from across 23 countries. These films run the gamut of genres and sensibilities, not to mention standards of convention and good taste. Some are from returning masters of the short-subject, others are the inspired experiments of emerging artists, but all carry a distinctive voice that we can't wait to share with you!

You'll experience a mixed-media potpourri of genre offerings in Fantastic Shorts, and both hair-raising and jaw-dropping permutations of horror in Short Fuse - a sidebar which we are excited to have attained gender parity in this year. The always eccentric Shorts With Legs program returns with a barrage of bold and baffling genre experimentation, and we're also peppering over a dozen shorts throughout the rest of the fest, pairing them with features that will conjure entertaining (and illuminating) juxtapositions.

New this year, however, and in keeping with this year's theme, is a shorts programme dedicated to contemporary Arabic cinema. Curated in part with Evrim Ersoy, Yalla! Arab Genre Shorts brings together four remarkable genre productions that encompass many of the genres that crop up throughout our traditional sidebars, but from regions we've rarely visited on screen,

Without a doubt, 2017 is destined to be our biggest celebration of fantastic short-form storytelling ever!

—Peter Kuplowsky



ART MOVIES MUSIC FOOD BEER

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FLORIAN BERTMER • BLACK DRAGON PRESS • BRAVE WAVE • BURLESQUE OF NORTH AMERICA
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JASON EDMISTON • FRANCESCO FRANCAVILLA • KEN GARDUNO • NICOLE GUSTAFSSON
JJ HARRISON • TOM HAUßRICK • HI-DEF NINJA • BRANDON HOLT • AARON HORKEY
INDUSTRY PRINT SHOP • INFO•RAMA • JOCK • ROB JONES • ALEX KIRZHNER • RORY KURTZ
LANDLAND • LIGHT IN THE ATTIC • DAN MCCARTHY • MILAN RECORDS • MIKE MITCHELL
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SHIP TO SHORE PHONOCO • TODD SLATER • STAN & VINCE • CAMERON STEWART
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Fantastic Fest

FANTASTIC FEST
2017

OFFICIAL MERCHANDISE





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MOVIE ICONS

A staple of the Incredibly Strange Film Festival Guide since 1995, "the icons" are a quick, fun visual reference guide for the movies and events in the program. The 2017 Fantastic Fest Guide continues the tradition for discerning American audiences. Want to watch a date flick with primate love, Jungian concepts, voodoo and a shocking ending? No problem. Let the icons before each movie summary guide you to complete cinematic satisfaction. Thanks again to Ant and Mike from the Incredibly Strange Film Festival in New Zealand for conceiving and executing the genre movie icon art form.

OUR EIGHT NEW THEMES DESIGNED EXCLUSIVELY FOR FANTASTIC FEST 2017 BY ICON KING MICHAEL SHEILS






HOOK FOR HAND
HUGE MOUSTACHES
HYPNOTISM
INBRED
INCEST
INFANT DEATH
INFLATABLE SEX
ISOLATION
JESUS
JUNGIAN CONCEPTS
JUNGLE FEVER
JUVENILE DELINQUENT
KAIJU
KILLER CULT
KILLER KID
KITSCH
KUNG FU
LACTATION
LARGE ORGANS
LESBIAN
LESBIAN VAMPIRE
LIPOSUCTION
LOOKS LIKE A DUCK
LOW BUDGET
MAD MAGICIAN
MARIJUANA
MASTURBATION
MELODRAMA
MENAGE A TROIS
MENTAL ILLNESS
METAL
MILD VIOLENCE
MONSTER SEX
MONSTERS
MONTAGE
MOTHER ISSUES
MOUNTAIN TAPPING
MULLET
MUSIC
NASTY ANIMATION
NAZIS
NECROPHILIA
NO BUDGET
NOIR
NOODLING
NUDITY
OSCAR SHAME
PEDOPHILIA
PENIS TRAUMA
PET ABUSE
PETROL SNIFFING
POLICE BRUTALITY
POLITICALLY INCORRECT
PORNOGRAPHY
POSSESSION
PRETENTIOUS
PRIMATE LOVE
PROSTITUTE
PSYCHIC
PUBIC HAIR
PUPPET SEX
RACIST
RAPE
RELIGIOUS CULT
REVENGE
ROBOTS
SATAN
SCALPING
SCENERY CHEWING
SCHIZO
SCIENCE FICTION
SCIENTIST
SCOPOPHILIA
SELF MUTILATION
SEMEN
SEWAGE
SHAKEY FACE
SHOCKING ENDING
SKELETON IN THE CLOSET
SLEAZY
SPACE EXPLORATION
SPECIAL EVENT
STOCK FOOTAGE
STOP MOTION
STRIPPERS
STUNTS
SUICIDE
SURGERY
SURPRISE ENDING
SURREAL
TALKING ANIMALS
TALKING BRAIN
TELEPATHY
TERRIFYING
TOILET HUMOR
TORTURE
TRANSAMATION
TRASH
TREKKIE DELIGHT
TRIPPY
TRUE STORY
TWIST
ULTRA VIOLENCE
UNDERAGE SEX
VAMPIRES
VIDEO GAMES
VOODOO
WEREWOLF
WITCH DOCTOR
WORKMAN'S CRACK
THE WORKS
WRESTLING
Z-GRADE
ZOMBIE

PARTIES &

PETER PAN PUTT PUTT

Peter Pan Mini-Golf

Each year, electrically excited FF-goers attend our official/unofficial night-before-the-fest showdown throwdown at Peter Pan Mini-Golf. Festivalizers from across the globe, from decade-long veterans to FF first-timers, are invited to BYOB and pick their favorite ball as they set out for 18 holes of neon dinosaurs, wily pirates and good good times. Peter Pan Mini-Golf is located just a few blocks from our home base at Alamo South Lamar, and it actually has a giant pink rabbit (you're not just drunk).

OPENING NIGHT PARTY PAJAMA JAM

The Highball

There is no damn way we'd kick off our megamaniacal 13th year without a bone-busting blowout to welcome the Fantastic Family to Austin. This time around, we're rarin' to rage late into the night... so you'd better come in your most mayhem-ready sleepover gear. In addition to the standard alcohol and DJ dance party wildness, we're gonna get pillow-fighted and nighty-nighted with a PJ contest, truth or dare, Twister, Sharpie face-painting, pizza and daaaaamn.

DOUG LOVE MOVIES PODCAST

The Highball

Comedian Doug Benson (SUPER HIGH ME; LAST COMIC STANDING; CHRONIC-CON) invites surprise filmmaker and comedian guests to sit down, talk movies and play movie trivia games... while drunk, stoned or both! The game is a reimagined version of the Leonard Maltin Game, which has been described as Name That Tune with movies instead of songs. The game consists of Benson reading the cast of an unknown movie in reverse order (star of the movie comes last) from Leonard Maltin's Movie Guide to his guests, who attempt to guess the movie! Come enjoy a HighBall cocktail, relax and laugh until your cocktail comes out your nose.

THE MONSTER SQUAD MEGA-MASH

The Highball

The monster-murderous pre-pubescent attack pack is BACK! The actual heroes AND monsters of the beloved 1987 masterpiece THE MONSTER SQUAD are swooping in to FF to debut the first portion of their Squad doc... and YOU can be a star of their film. The footage shot at the fest will be part of the documentary's finale, starring all of us pre-Halloween partying with the Squad at The Highball. Attending cast and creators to be announced soon!

FANTASTIC DEBATES

South Austin Gym

From verbal violence to pugilistic pummeling, we have the rage you crave at the Fantastic Debates, where the burning questions facing the fan community are resolved once and for all, first with words, and then with furious FISTS!! Past Fantastic Debates have featured screen titans like Keanu Reeves, Elijah Wood, Michelle Rodriguez, Ti West and Joe Swanberg (with a surprise visit from Dolph Lundgren!), as well as a host of critics, bloggers, bruisers and movie maniacs. Debaters to be announced shortly... and brutally!

AGFA MIXER

The Highball

The American Genre Film Archive -- dedicated to keeping genre movies alive, and on the big screen -- wants to meet you in person! Whether you're a theater booker, festival booker, film critic or passionate moviegoer, join the AGFA squad in the Highball for snacks, lively chat and a short video presentation on AGFA's many daredevil acts of film preservation.

EVENTS

YOUR OPINION SUCKS

PRESENTED BY ROTTEN TOMATOES

The Highball

Face off against your favorite Rotten Tomatoes critics in the ultimate discussion about the best and worst in movies and TV shows. Voice your opinion about a film or TV show you love, hate, or love to hate, and then debate your point with the panel. From superheroes to The Godfather or even '80s cult classics, no theme is off limits. The audience gets to join in by voting "fresh" or "rotten" with their own Tomatometer signs and share their thoughts live on social using the hashtag #RTYOS.

MALTIN AT THE MOVIES: GILBERT GOTTFRIED

The Highball

Cinema's favorite son, the mighty Leonard Maltin, is back at Fantastic Fest! For this talk, the renowned film historian will be teaming up with a longtime friend and fellow cinemaniac, the amazing Gilbert Gottfried! The two of them will discuss Gottfried's gut-busting decades-long career as "America's creepy uncle," and will tackle insane anecdotes covering the last century of movies!

CHAOS REIGNS: KARAOKE APOCALYPSE PARTY

The Highball

The most manically monstrous week of your year can only be celebrated in the most thunderous way possible. So in the iron-fisted mic-slinging FF tradition, Austin's live karaoke rock ravagers Karaoke Apocalypse will be bringing YOU onstage to perform the finest metal (and punk) anthems. Imagine howling like an elemental force while backed by a fully-armed five-piece metal/punk/chaos combo. Whether you want to rock like a hurricane, scream the number of the beast or live after midnight, the doors of hell are swinging wide to let you ride the lightning to your rock n' roll nightmare.

GRADY HENDRIX: PAPERBACKS FROM HELL

Alamo South Lamar

In the early '70s, three books changed horror forever: ROSEMARY'S BABY, THE EXORCIST, and THE OTHER. The first horror novels to hit bestseller lists since 1940, they opened the floodgates for an avalanche of horror paperbacks to pour onto supermarket shelves throughout the '70s and '80s until SILENCE OF THE LAMBS slit the genre's throat in the early '90s. Writer Grady Hendrix delivers a mind-melting oral history of this forgotten world of Nazi leprechauns, skeleton doctors and killer crabs. Prepare yourself for a tour of... the Paperbacks from Hell!!!

THE THING: INFECTION AT OUTPOST 31 GAME PLAY

PRESENTED BY MONDO & PROJECT RAYGUN

It appears we're having trouble communicating with the antarctic research crew down at Outpost 31. We received a distress signal but we haven't been able to establish contact since. We're looking for recruits to help us figure out what's going on down there. We've all heard the rumors of a major discovery buried in the ice but at this time we can not confirm early reports. We don't anticipate danger but we recommend volunteers come prepared for any unforeseen events that may occur. You'll be debriefed at the Highball. Join us to be among the first humans on earth to play Mondo & Project Raygun's THE THING: INFECTION AT OUTPOST 31.

MALTIN ON MOVIES: ELIJAH WOOD

The Highball

Two of the festival's most familiar and beloved pals hunker down for a casual discussion about Elijah's career, from his early days as a child star to becoming one of the most visible actors of the modern age, and all the way to his recent adventurous turns as a producer, bringing the world indescribable gems from the genre underground.

PARTIES &

FANTASTIC FEUD

Alamo South Lamar

Our annual vulgar display of geek knowledge warfare, organized by Scott Weinberg and Maxim Pozderac, pits the globe's greatest horror scholars against each other in a galactic onslaught of mental agility, verbal hostility and full-tilt brutality. Filmmakers, journalists, FF programmers, and movie megaminds collide in this no-holds-barred deathride of useless cinematic information. There will be beer on the floor and bodily fluid on the walls.

THE GLASSED JEDI: THE STAR WARS DRINK COMPETITION

The Highball

The Alamo's reigning alcoholmeister Bill Norris combines his love for creative beverages and the Star Wars universe in this searing display of interplanetary talent. Come sample the galaxy's finest liquors in impossibly delicious combinations, guaranteed to send you to the Dark Side.

PUKE AND EXPLODE!: THE FF GROSS-OUT CONTEST

The Highball

After a week of delicious food and drink at the Alamo, what's better than witnessing a handful of contestants down increasingly bizarre rounds of food (and "food") until only one steel-stomached human is left standing?! While we promise that everything ingested is technically edible, you'll be seeing people eat things that were never intended to touch human lips... all in the quest to take home a very grand prize. Gird your loins and line your girdle for the most inhuman ingestion mayhem on earth, as we PUKE AND EXPLODE!!!

GRADY HENDRIX: SUMMERLAND LOST

Alamo South Lamar

Full of shaved cats and bio-mechanical sex cults, SUMMERLAND LOST tells the all-shocking, all-true tale of the drunk Victorian teenagers who spoke to the dead and changed the world. Prepare yourself for the real-life story of how they teamed up with an Arctic explorer and the ghost of Ben Franklin to answer the ultimate question: Is there life after death?

EVERYTHING IS TERRIBLE: THE GREAT SATAN

Alamo South Lamar

Since the dawn of existence, man has searched for answers... and failed. But the fog of existence has finally cleared, thanks to the eternal fruits of Everything Is Terrible! Over the last 10 years, EIT! has reinterpreted our shared video history almost 3,000 times, collected over 15,000 Jerry Maguire VHS tapes, and forever altered the collective consciousness. Now, with their longtime collaborator Lucifer, Everything Is Terrible! will show us all who we are, why we are here, and what we should be doing with our paltry time on this planet. Your journey will brim with goopy ghouls, sexy serpents, creepy creeps, dumb demons, and of course Christian ducks. Join your Dadgods for this very special Fantastic Fest exclusive sneak peek into the unfinished masterwork that will soon become T H E G R E A T S A T A N.

Please bring your offerings of Jerry Maguire VHS tapes to the altar when called upon. This is important.

EVENTS

THE SWEETEST TABOO: 100 BEST CHILD KILLS

Alamo South Lamar

Until human reproduction is finally made illegal, we can only fantasize about a world free of tiny, whiny, selfish, boogery humans. That's where movies come in, whisking us away on beautiful visions of pre-adolescent annihilation. Your 100 Best Kills curators/hosts Laird Jimenez and Zack Carlson return to remind us that every child is a treasure... and we must bury them.

DOUG BENSON MOVIE INTERRUPTION: BABE

Alamo South Lamar

Rampaging comedian Doug Benson and a handful of beloved wise-asses respectfully butcher America's second most famous talking pig, BABE. By the way, did you know this movie was written by George "Mad Max" Miller? Life... it's crazy! Anyway, as the movie plays in full, Benson & company enhance/verbally abuse it, turning this perennial family classic into a knee-slappin' slaughterhouse of barnyard hilarity.

NERD RAP

The Highball

NERRRRRDDDDDSSS! Bring that beat back!! From the early nerdcore albums of MC Frontalot to the Epic Rap Battles of History and the entire careers of the Lonely Island and Childish Gambino, rapping nerds have become major players in pop culture. Now it's your turn to show us what you've got, in the seventh annual Fantastic Fest Nerd Rap Throwdown! What is Nerd Rap? Simply put, it's any hip hop beat paired with an emcee (or multiple microphone fiends) rapping about geek culture. Think you've got what it takes to become a Geek God of the Mic?

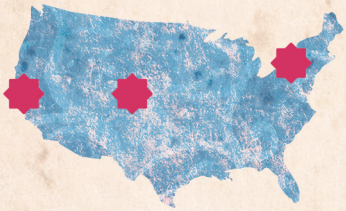
CADAVEROUS CALAMITOUS CLOSING NIGHT PARTY W/ ITCHY-O

As we slam down the coffin lid on the 13th year of rampaging FF hysteria, we unleash the collective beast in one night of blistering madness. This time, we're kidnapping the entire FF audience and whisking them off to Texas' epicenter of horrifying insanity. While we can't announce the exact location just yet, rest assured it'll be one of the most unforgettable nights of your life.

As if that weren't enough, we'll be welcoming back the undisputed masters of musical mayhem, the legendary Itchy-O, who will be appearing at FF in their full, unrestrained, massive 32-piece form for the VERY FIRST TIME, spreading sonic confusion through the hearts and bones of everyone within a hundred-mile radius.

Peel off your face! Punch a grave!! RIDE THE BLADE!!!

FANTASTIC FEST
SATELLITE FESTIVALS
NEW YORK ✿ SAN FRANCISCO ✿ DENVER



Fantastic Fest is proud to announce the creation of a trio of 'satellites' hitting three flagship Alamo Drafthouse theater locations: New York, San Francisco and Denver. Spanning the weekend of September 29 to October 1, these satellites will share a highly-curated selection of Fantastic Fest's signature programming with audiences who crave the best in adventurous genre cinema from across the world.

CHECK DRAFTHOUSE.COM/FANTASTICFEST FOR THE MOST UP-TO-DATE SCHEDULE



NEW YORK FANTASTIC FEST
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FILMS SHOWING:
AGFA PRESENTS: MYSTERY MOVIE
APPLECART
BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL
BRAWL IN CELL BLOCK 99
GEMINI
HAUNTERS: THE ART OF THE SCARE
JAILBREAK
MY FRIEND DAHMER
TOP KNOT DETECTIVE



SAN FRANCISCO FANTASTIC FEST
ALAMO DRAFTHOUSE NEW MISSION

FILMS SHOWING:
AGFA PRESENTS: MYSTERY MOVIE
APPLECART
BRAWL IN CELL BLOCK 99
GEMINI
HAGAZUSSA - A HEATHEN'S CURSE
HAUNTERS: THE ART OF THE SCARE
JAILBREAK
MY FRIEND DAHMER
THE SQUARE
TOP KNOT DETECTIVE



DENVER FANTASTIC FEST
ALAMO DRAFTHOUSE SLOANS LAKE

FILMS SHOWING:
AGFA PRESENTS: MYSTERY MOVIE
APPLECART
BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL
BRAWL IN CELL BLOCK 99
GEMINI
HAGAZUSSA - A HEATHEN'S CURSE
HAUNTERS: THE ART OF THE SCARE
JAILBREAK
MY FRIEND DAHMER
RIFT
THE SQUARE
TOP KNOT DETECTIVE

AMERICAN GENRE FILM ARCHIVE

PRESENTED WITH SOMETHING WEIRD

BAT PUSSY

51 min | USA

CONTENT WARNING: This movie contains scenes that will rot your libido.

The citizens of Gothum City are under attack by smut filmmakers. And only one hero can help! Bat Pussy (Dora Dildo) hangs out in her secret headquarters (a.k.a. an outhouse). When her "twat begins to twitch," warning her of imminent crime, Bat Pussy hops on her Holy Hippity-Hop to foil the grotesque sex schemes of unhappily married couple Buddy and Sam!

Produced by anonymous dirtbags in an unknown 1970s wasteland, BAT PUSSY is considered to be the first smut parody in history. This fact simultaneously explains everything and nothing. On paper, this movie is what happens when a porn producer gets inspired by the 1960s Batman TV show but only has $5. In reality, this movie is what happens when your wildest dreams and most horrifying nightmares collide in an explosion of flaccid stupefaction. The lunatic filmmakers have never been identified, providing further proof that this movie was most likely made by extraterrestrials. BAT PUSSY is the unforgettable and anti-erogenous superheroic adventure that a Decidedly Cool comic book company hoped you would never see.



AGFA is beyond excited to present a brand new 2K transfer of this legendary sexploitation paradox from Something Weird's 16mm print — the only one in existence. For this screening, we'll be joined by Lisa Petrucci, the inspiring co-founder of Something Weird, in person!

In the words of Bat Pussy herself: "No dirty muthafuckas are fuckin' in my holy Gothum City without me!" (Joseph A. Ziemba)

SECRET SCREENING

FYI, there's a chance that this screening will become one of the most talked-about events in the history of forever.

After years of detective work, AGFA located and purchased the only existing film elements for one of the most sought-after "lost" holy grails in the history of exploitation cinema. We'd love to tell you the name of the movie. And also the name of the person who wrote, directed and stars in it. But that wouldn't be fun. Trust us when we say that this movie was meant to be seen in a theater filled with gutter-dwelling perverts who demand nothing less than 1001% F-U-N. AGFA is proud to share the world premiere of our brand new 2K transfer of this legendary movie with the most appreciative and discerning festival audience on the planet. That's you. (Joseph A. Ziemba)

YALLA HABIBI

ANYAB

1981 | DIR: **Mohammed Shebl** | **100 min** | **Egypt**

MANY THANKS TO

In 1981, Egyptian cinema unleashed a maelstrom of weirdness on unsuspecting audiences. This ambitious and brilliant discovery from yesteryear will make you question all that you think you know about Arabic cinema.

On one hand, the film is an adaptation of THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW. But instead of the transvestite Frank N. Furter, we get a coven of vampires, all of whom are dedicated to seducing our heroes into the horror of their world without ever missing a jaunty beat in the songs that they sing. However, ANYAB's ambitions are much wider than that. Between the crazy costumes, the horror references, the disco numbers and the action, we get a running commentary on the social situation in Egypt. Whether it's the unemployment of youth, the class war or poverty, the film digs deep within '80s political geography to find interesting and universal statements to pass on.



Everyone knows the story: the lovers whose car breaks down, the gloomy mansion and the weird convention occurring within. ANYAB takes this basic framework but goes full-tilt mad in its adaptation by throwing in every reference to vampire lore filtered through an Egyptian sensibility. There's simply nothing like it. (Evrim Ersoy)

THE ORIGINALS

2017 | DIR: **Marwan Hamed** | **125 min** | **Egypt**

Samir is your average bank employee: middle-aged, overweight and content in his nightly dreams about appearing on Egypt's top talent show. When Samir gets fired by the bank, he finds himself at a loss. Unable to tell anyone in his own family, he continues living out the pretense, fully aware that the chamber is closing in. One late night, the ringing doorbell signals for him the biggest chance of his life yet: Samir is about to join The Originals and nothing will ever be the same again.

Dropping like the bastard child of Mario Bava and Nicolas Winding Refn, this masterful exploration of modern Egypt is rife with philosophy, mystery and unexpected comedy. Using long takes, unusual locations and incredible choices in music, Hamed creates an Egypt rarely seen in the West..

Drawing from exquisite performances by Maged El Kadweny as the hapless Samir and Khaled El Sawy as his mysterious recruiter, the mysterious world engulfs the viewer much as it does Samir. From modern supermarkets to bank



offices, we slowly morph into mysterious bazaars, historical reenactments, strange boat rides and wild legends.

Although you might have seen films from Egypt before, there's nothing out there comparable to THE ORIGINALS. Don't miss this first opportunity outside of its home country to catch this magnificent film on the big screen. (Evrim Ersoy)

YALLA! SHORTS



LAST DAYS OF THE MAN OF TOMORROW

2017 • DIR: Fadi Baki • 29 min • Germany, Lebanon

A remarkable mock-doc that profoundly explores Lebanon's turbulent history through the life and times of a reclusive metal automaton that once was emblematic of the country's hopes and dreams.



DUNIA

2017 • DIR: Amer Jamhour • 15 min • Qatar

Little Dunia is asked to wait in the car in an effort to shield her from her mother's desperate decision. But when a curious cop comes a-knocking, Dunia's innocence is suspensefully put to the test.



FEAR: AUDIBLY

2017 • DIR: Maha Al-Saati • 22 min • Saudi Arabia

Anxious that Judgment Day is on the horizon, Amal keenly awaits to hear the Trumpet of Doom. Could the incessant mewing of cats in her office be the first harbinger? An eccentric and experimental rumination on the end of days.



KINDIL

2016 • DIR: Damien Ounouri • 40 min • Algeria, Kuwait, USA

The spectre of a murdered woman returns to the site of her death, claiming the lives of those responsible, as well as those who turned a blind eye. An arresting social critique in the guise of a vengeful ghost story.

The best little underground videogame party on the face of the planet.

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LOST GIRLS BOOK LAUNCH



THE NUDE VAMPIRE

Presented by Kier-la Janisse | 1970 | DIR: Jean Rollin | 88 min | France

The second of French director Jean Rollin's infamous vampire films and his sophomore feature effort, THE NUDE VAMPIRE (1970) takes an unusual, surrealistic approach to classic vampire tropes. A wealthy industrialist (Maurice Lemaitre) keeps a beautiful young girl (Caroline Cartier) hostage in his urban villa, believing her to be a vampire, and allows her to prey on a suicide cult while he has scientists analyze her blood. Through her, he hopes to uncover the key to immortal life, but his son (Olivier Rollin) catches a glimpse of her, falls in love and is determined to set her free. This budding romance pits father against son in a dizzying showdown set at two of Rollin's most beloved locations: a Gothic castle and a lonely French beach.

Using his trademark visual style, influenced in this case by Georges Franju's cult classic JUDEX (1963), Rollin transforms the stark palette of earlier black and white vampire fare explored by Universal Studios in the '30s and '40s and Italian Gothic filmmakers in the '60s into a colorful, countercultural tale.

The film is far from a straightforward interpretation of the horror genre and belongs to the nebulous, eerie realm of the French fantastique. Touching upon sinister cults, mad science and vampires as the next stage in human evolution, Rollin turns the film into a hopeful look at the class warfare plaguing Paris streets a few years earlier in 1968, resulting in an utterly unique genre experience.

The film will be screened in celebration of the launch of the new book from publisher Spectacular Optical, LOST GIRLS: THE PHANTASMAGORICAL CINEMA OF JEAN ROLLIN — the first examination of Rollin's work to be written by all women critics, scholars and film historians — and will be introduced by the book's editor/publisher Kier-La Janisse. (Samm Deighan)

US Premiere



THREE BILLBOARDS OUTSIDE EBBING, MISSOURI

2017 | DIR: **Martin McDonagh** | **110 min** | **USA**

The red band trailer for THREE BILLBOARDS OUTSIDE EBBING, MISSOURI opens with a no-nonsense Mildred Hayes (Frances McDormand) pointedly asking: "I assume you can't say something inflammatory and you can't say, 'fuck,' 'piss' or 'cunt,' that right?" Like the hapless associate on the receiving end of her fireball question, our jaws are rooted to the floor. And so the stage is set for an absolute incendiary lightning bolt of a film.

Much of the pleasure of THREE BILLBOARDS is experiencing it first hand. A grieving mother (McDormand) takes drastic measures in an attempt to catch her daughter's killer. Confronting the local police department to solve the case, she posts three billboards that challenge the sleepy, close-knit fabric of rural Ebbing, Missouri.

That, Fantastic friends, is all I can talk about as the rest is a dish best served fresh, cold and without any warning. What I will talk about is just how great this film really is. Simply put, THREE BILLBOARDS OUTSIDE EBBING, MISSOURI is a force of nature that is expertly realized by its creator and director Martin McDonagh. His third feature, THREE BILLBOARDS shows a revelatory progression of craft in which he's refined all of the learnings of its brilliant precursors, IN BRUGES and SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS, and exploded them in a voice and styling that is definitively his own. The result is a film that is singular and category-defining. McDonagh has established himself supremely and sits in a league of his own amongst the rare crop of contemporary auteurs.

While this is McDonagh's film, it's essential to recognize the litany of pitch perfect performances that fill every scene with empathy, honesty and truth. Spearheaded by the phenomenal triumvirate of McDormand, Woody Harrelson and Sam Rockwell, the later of whom cements his position as one of the most underrated actors of his generation, this is an exercise of ensemble acting in excelsior as they deliver McDonagh's words with the gravity and vigor they demand. THREE BILLBOARDS OUTSIDE EBBING, MISSOURI is an incredible piece of filmmaking and we are honored to have it open this year's Fantastic Fest. (Christian Parkes)



Regional Premiere

DOWNSIZING

2017 | DIR: Alexander Payne | 135 min | USA

Fantastic Fest is proud to close this year's festival with Alexander Payne's masterpiece-in-miniature DOWNSIZING. Returning to the big screen Payne has once again elevated the game with a trademark, razor sharp satire that squarely positions him as one of the finest filmmakers practicing the craft today.

Set in a near-future where miniaturization has become a solution to overpopulation and extinction of resources, doughy Dockers poster-boy Paul (Matt Damon) and his doting wife Audrey (Kristen Wiig) make the big leap to go small and downsize... in dramatic fashion. Desperate to shake the shackles of his mundane existence, Paul pursues the process of 'cellular miniaturization' in an attempt to grasp the better life that long looked to be out of his reach. As per with Payne, things don't always go to plan as he expertly blends social satire with slivers of science fiction and perfectly orchestrates his cast.

And what a cast he has assembled. Matt Damon eschews his action hero past to flex his supreme versatility, Kristen Wiig shines in a big screen role that finally expresses her vast range and depth, while exemplary performances from Laura Dern, Christoph Waltz, and an absolutely stand out showing from Hong Chau round out an all-star array of talent.

Payne has long shared his affection for the mediocrity of middle-aged masculinity. From ELECTION to SIDEWAYS to ABOUT SCHMIDT, he has reveled in the American everyman to glorious effect. But it is with DOWNSIZING that he has excelled above all. Only in his hands could going small be so big. (Christian Parkes)

World Premiere



1922

2017 | DIR: **Zak Hilditch** | **101 min** | **USA**

Guilt has always been a powerful motivation in fiction and even those who've never read Dostoyevsky's 19th Century novel CRIME AND PUNISHMENT know the basic theme: there are actions in life that we can never forget because they are drilled down into the deepest and darkest parts of ourselves. So leave it to Stephen King and genre visionary Zak Hilditch to give us a version of CRIME AND PUNISHMENT that incorporates sheer cinematic horror.

Thomas Jane plays Wilfred James. Tied to his farm because of both his fear of the city and the importance that the farm has played as it has been passed down from his father and grandfather, Wilfred is in constant conflict with his wife Arlette (Molly Parker) who wants to move. When Arlette decides to leave him for the city and make his property worthless in the process, Wilfred is forced to take action to stop her and he manipulates their son Henry into helping him.

In 1922, King reuses one of his most popular plot devices: the dead don't have to stay dead. But here, not only is it scary, but it's absorbing due to an incredible performance by Thomas Jane, who is almost unrecognizable in this role. Jane is 1922's Rodion Raskolnikov and you can feel the guilt on nearly every word that escapes Wilfred's tortured soul. He's also not anything close to the embodiment of Hollywood masculinity that you're used to seeing. He's fragile here and as the movie goes on, Jane's performance and appearance seems to get remarkably frailer.

2017 is giving us lots of Stephen King. DARK TOWER and IT have both come out in theaters. Television is giving us GERALD'S GAME and 1922. It's a wonderful time for King fans as well as for audiences who appreciate the horrible coming from the ordinary. (James Emanuel Shapiro)



International Premiere

3FT BALL & SOULS

2017 | DIR: **Yoshio Kato** | **93 min** | **Japan**

There's a internet suicide room in Japan called Life Club where strangers get together to discuss their plans on how to end it all. Four members of this group ally with a mission: they are going to use explosive to snuff out their lives. However, at the moment of the explosion, something unexpected happens; the four find themselves thrown back to just before the moment they detonated the device. So they try again. And again. And again. Something is wrong and the group must figure it out so they can be allowed to perish. In a big explosion.

Director Yoshio Kato's entry into the pantheon of time travel movies operates on multiple levels. Sweetly comic, outrageously confusing and beautifully human, a story of how the moment of death brings four strangers to come to understand life is explored through amazing character work and wonderful cinematography.

Winning the audience award at Skip City International Festival, this wonderful film demonstrates Yoshio Kato assertively developing his voice and becoming one of the most interesting filmmakers to emerge from not only Japan, but from within the entire genre world. (Evrim Ersoy)



Regional Premiere

78/52

2017 | DIR: **Alexandre O. Philippe** | **91 min** | **USA**

The shower scene in PSYCHO is accepted as one of Hitchcock's most masterful achievements. Both technically and in terms of storytelling, the scene signals a peak for the master in demonstrating his ability as well as the glee with which he pulled the rug from under an entire generation of viewers.

And now filmmaker Alexandre Philippe puts the shower scene under a microscope to look at it in every possible way. From expert interviews to technical analysis, the film covers almost every angle about the infamous scene. With interviewees ranging from Elijah Wood to Peter Bogdanovich, the roster of interviewees on screen run the gamut of filmmaking and demonstrate the scene's varying emotional effects.

But what could be in danger of being a dry examination instead becomes a meditation and celebration of Hitchcock and his ability. Peppered with brilliant anecdotes about PSYCHO, 78/52 brings to us a joyful celebration that is as exuberant as it is thorough.

78/52 is thrust forward by personal stories, each one highlighting PSYCHO and the shower scene in relation to filmmakers, actors, fans and more — the technical is dissected as much as the emotional — and for the entirety of its running time 78/52 brings to life the best of film criticism and analysis in a way never seen before on the big screen. Placing the film in social context and defining history through the circumstances surrounding it, 78/52 paints a picture of the film world on the brink of change and shows how PSYCHO delivered that change.

Whether a film lover or a historian, anyone who watches 78/52 will be infected by the joy that Philippe and his interviewees bring to the subject. 78/52 is a glorious celebration of Hitchcock (and cinema) that reminds us of why we all became fans in the first place! (Evrim Ersoy)

PLAYS WITH: **NOTHING A LITTLE SOAP AND WATER CAN'T FIX** [SEE PG 97]



World Premiere

ANNA AND THE APOCALYPSE

2017 | DIR: **John McPhail** | **107 min** | **Scotland**

Teenage Anna's life is typical enough. Chafing against the narrow horizons of her small town, she dreams of bigger things. It's not so much that she doesn't love her friends and family — she does — it's just that they're all so... familiar. So typical. So predictable. Her childhood best friend aches for a romance that she has no interest in, no matter how close they might be. The school jock that she had a fling with is proving to be disappointingly predictable in his behavior. And it's becoming progressively harder for Anna to conceal her disappointment with just how satisfied her widower-father is with the blue collar simplicity of his never-changing existence. And then it all goes to shit.

The night of the high school Christmas concert marks the arrival of the undead in Anna's small town. And so begins a struggle to band together and survive. Future dreams are forced aside by the overwhelming need to survive the present in this winning Scottish musical-horror-comedy.

Yes, we said musical. And we mean it. John McPhail's feature has its origins in Ryan McHenry's BAFTA-nominated short film titled simply ZOMBIE MUSICAL. And while every film needs to stand purely on its own terms, there's no getting around the fact that this particular film's origins add an extra layer of poignancy to the whole affair.

Following the success of his short film, McHenry set to work on writing the script and music for the feature expansion. McHenry was well on the road to making the feature version when — still in his mid-twenties — he was diagnosed with cancer. He would achieve viral fame as the creator of the "Ryan Gosling Won't Eat His Cereal" videos on Vine while in the hospital before losing his battle. McHenry's sense of humor thrived even as his body failed.

Honoring McHenry's wishes, producer Naysun Alae-Carew refused to let the project die with its creator. Enter rising star John McPhail, whose deft directorial touch crafts what now stands as both Anna and McHenry's statement on their own impending mortality and their stubborn refusal to let it end them even as it claims them. (Todd Brown)



World Premiere

APPLECART

2017 | DIR: **Bradford Baruh** | **86 min** | **USA**

The Pollack family is ready for vacation. Jason has just graduated, Jessica is bringing her friend Becky, and James and Casey are both trying to take their minds off James' inoperable liver cancer. James is skeptical but Casey is futilely hoping that a weekend at her friend Mika's cabin that happens to be built on a deposit of iron oxide will cure him or at least help him feel better. Everything seems normal, the cabin is rustic but nice, Jessica and Jason snipe at each other like most siblings and James' awkward dad humor keeps the mood light.

But their weekend away takes an odd turn when James finds a woman passed out in the woods near the cabin. After bringing her inside, Casey leaves to find better reception and call an ambulance. While she's gone, the mysterious woman's behavior sets the rest of the Pollacks on edge. When Casey returns, things get too strange and the Pollacks reach the limits of their hospitality. But the woman isn't ready to leave, and the family's relaxing weekend away is about to turn deadly.

First-time feature director Bradford Baruh has deftly constructed a memorable midnighter that takes cues from everything from EVIL DEAD to Shakespeare. He wisely packed his stellar cast with genre mainstays including Brea Grant, AJ Bowen and Barbara Crampton. Grant carries the film with ease, while Bowen's goofy dad and Crampton's enigmatic, otherworldly performance add fun and unease in equal measure. Using a true crime show as a framing device, Baruh has found a creative way to tell a non-linear story. From the intense, unsettling score underlining the innovative narrative structure to the rubber and latex effects work awash in practical gore, APPLECART is weird, wild and blood-soaked, an old school horror film in all the right ways. (Luke Mullen)

PLAYS WITH: **THE END OF DECAY** [SEE PG 96]



Repertory/International Premiere

BAASHA

1995 | DIR: **Suresh Krissna** | **165 min** | **India**

There is no Indian movie celebrity like Superstar Rajinikanth. The second highest paid actor in Asia (right behind Jackie Chan), Rajini is a hurricane of charisma, pithy one-liners and attitude for days. With a career that stretches back to the '70s, the one-time bus conductor is now an icon around the world whose films draw record audiences both in India and abroad.

In 1995, Rajini starred in BAASHA, a film that would forever change his career and the Tamil language film industry. BAASHA tells the story of Manikam, an autorickshaw driver who works hard to support his family and his neighborhood. When Manikam's younger brother Shiva becomes a police officer and gets a little too eager to take on the local crime lords, the gangsters decide to take him down a peg and put a beating on him that he'll never forget.

Not one to suffer insults quietly, Manikam takes offense and decides to take on the gangsters and return his little corner of the world to normal. He has a secret up his sleeve, though. Manikam has a history of violence that the hoodlums aren't ready for and he's out for blood. What follows is an out-of-control ratcheting up of tensions between Manikam and his smarmy foe Mark Anthony (played to the hilt by the sleepy-eyed character actor Raghuvaran).

Action scenes are interspersed with gloriously out of context songs, people are beaten bloody and crucified as warnings to their neighborhood not to be the next to speak out and Rajini holds it all together with the confidence that can only come from knowing you're the best.

BAASHA introduced a new kind of anti-hero to Tamil cinema and helped to cement Rajini as the greatest film star that Tamil Nadu had ever seen. The film reminds one of hazy late '80s Hong Kong action, sparkly Busby Berkeley-style choreography and the kind of scenery chewing that Hollywood abandoned with the demise of '40s adventure serials. From Suresh Krissna, director of the insane identical twin serial killer masterpiece AALAVANDHAN, BAASHA is a newly remastered Indian crime classic. (Josh Hurtado)

Texas Premiere



BAD GENIUS

2017 | DIR: **Nattawut Poonpiriya** | **130 min** | **Thailand**

Even by 9th grade, Lynn is already a classic overachiever, so skilled in math that she can immediately calculate what it's going to cost her widowed dad to accept a scholarship that promises free tuition and better opportunities for her after graduation. But after helping her panic-stricken best friend Grace get through a tough multiple-choice exam, she inadvertently discovers an exploding market of students with lots of money and little interest in studying, eventually developing an ingenious series of hand signals to shepherd her classmates through the dehumanizing standardized tests that will determine their college prospects. In the meantime, Bank, her chief rival at school, is a straight-arrow student afraid enough of himself getting in trouble that he's willing to rat on anyone else to avoid even the impression of impropriety.

Bearing a title that hints at the hand-wringing morality of a Hays Code-era teen movie but a story with the operatic pacing and meticulous structure of a Michael Mann heist, BAD GENIUS starts off as a portrait of smart, poor kids leveling the playing field against their dumb, rich counterparts and quickly evolves into a sophisticated morality tale about the business of academia and the emotional cost of undermining your own scholastic achievements for a substantial if short-term payoff. Thai director Nattawut Poonpiriya (2012's COUNTDOWN) uses extreme widescreen imagery to isolate the characters and keep them at odds even when they're conspiring together to fleece their prestigious school, and later, wrestle with their own consciences as teachers and parents begin to amplify their expectations in the wake of improved test scores.

Filled with rich, compelling performances and enough twists and turns to make test-taking seem genuinely exciting, BAD GENIUS chronicles the insane lengths to which these kids will go to supply what seems like the better part of Thailand's undergraduates with answers to a test that has the potential to make or break their academic fates. (Todd Gilchrist)



North American Premiere

BEFORE WE VANISH

2017 | DIR: **Kiyoshi Kurosawa** | **129 min** | **Japan**

Love is in short supply these days. Leave it to prolific Japanese auteur Kiyoshi Kurosawa to create a film that flips a lot of previous themes from his early films to spin a genre yarn where humanity's most positive qualities could be the key to our salvation. Surprising? Absolutely! Very few filmmakers can stake claim to the extraordinary run that Kurosawa had in the late '90s from CURE (1997) to PULSE (2001). It's evident that these films take a very pessimistic view of humanity. CURE, PULSE and CHARISMA (1999) suggested that humanity faced the apocalypse due to Kurosawa's negative view of how people interacted with each other. Even BRIGHT FUTURE (2002), in spite of its name, suggested that Armageddon was on its way despite an attempt to change our existence. Kurosawa was at his best when he was angry and frustrated with society. The films that he produced during the late 90's were among the best in the world and elevated Kurosawa to one of the most treasured international filmmakers in the genre space.

Flash ahead a few decades and Kurosawa is again infusing a genre narrative with human commentary. This time, Kurosawa deals with an alien invasion narrative. The creatures can take control of our bodies. They're part of an initial attack force that's been sent to understand humans, but the best way they come to understand humans is by taking away their emotions and values. By coming to learn human values, they know that most of us aren't worth saving.

This nihilism can easily not just engulf an individual but an entire world. However, Kurosawa has gotten to the point in his life where he cannot give up on his fellow man and woman. Even in our lowest moments of despair, we're capable of finding worth in each other. Empathy exists no matter how terrible the situation is. That's more relevant today than ever and leave it to a master like Kurosawa to entertain and enlighten us with this knowledge in his latest film. (James Emanuel Shapiro)

US Premiere



BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

2017 | DIR: **Takashi Miike** | **141 min** | **Japan**

It's a delightful coincidence that Takashi Miike's hundredth film also happens to be an adaptation of the infamous BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL manga. This match seems to have been made in heaven!

Remaining loyal to the source material both visually and thematically, Takashi Miike still manages to make the film his own through clever visuals, terrific performances and incredible mind-blowing action scenes.

Manji, a samurai who simply cannot die, crosses paths with Rin Asano, a young girl hell-bent on vengeance against the master swordsmen who destroyed her family. Although Manji's interest in humanity is lacking, to say the least, he finds himself allying with the young girl to help achieve her goal. Arms will be torn, heads will be chopped off and blood will splatter as the immortal samurai hones in on his targets and destroys anything and everything that stands in his way.

Crafted with madcap energy, the film takes in Manji's duels with the group of master swordsmen who live just to fight. Faced with their nihilistic attitude, Manji finds himself questioning his life and journey. Along the way, he finds himself embroiled within the twisted politics of Japan's warlords and encounters Shira, a mercenary acting as a killing tool. As all of the warring parties come together in a final encounter, a lot of blood will be spilled and a lot of limbs will be torn off.

Shot with Miike's meticulous eye for action and detail, BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL feels like the manga come to life — this is the highest compliment that can be paid for such an adaptation. Miike creates a vivid universe that teems with life — and blood! — and shoots the action with the same flair that he displayed in 13 ASSASSINS. For fans of wall-to-wall action, there's simply no better title this year to watch on the big screen. This is a bloody brilliant journey from beginning to end! (Evrim Ersoy)



North American Premiere

BLUE MY MIND

2017 | DIR: **Lisa Brühlmann** | **97 min** | **Switzerland**

Lisa Brühlmann's BLUE MY MIND follows 15-year-old Mia (Luna Wedler) as she undergoes a life-changing transformation, one that leaves her examining her body and her very existence in a new light.

Switzerland is best known for its alpine landscapes, wonderful cheeses and cuckoo clocks. With a few notable (and less notable) exceptions, Switzerland is not known for producing genre films in any memorable capacity. BLUE MY MIND is about to change that.

Every so often as a programmer, you have the privilege of witnessing the birth of a great filmmaker, and there is nothing more exciting than sharing your find with audiences. Not only is BLUE MY MIND Lisa Brühlmann's first feature, it's also, amazingly, her graduation feature from film school. Just as impressive, more than 50% of the technicians on BLUE MY MIND's production team were film students as well. Trained as an actress, Brühlmann went back to film school in order to learn more about the process of filmmaking. We should all celebrate the fact that she did, because we're gifted with an up-and-coming filmmaker who has something significant to say. BLUE MY MIND is a fantastic tale about a young girl whose body starts transforming after she faints during a not-so-harmless game with girlfriends. Mia fights the dramatic changes to her form with every resource she possesses, but after some time and a few unavoidable confrontations with herself, she submits to the relentless drive of nature itself.

For her first feature, Lisa Brühlmann wrote a beautiful piece about female body transformation as an allegory for puberty, and about a rather chaotic friendship between two girls who learn to rely on each other amid the most damning of circumstances. Carried by two young upcoming actresses who deliver remarkable performances (Wedler and Zoe Pastelle Holthuizen), Brühlmann's first feature will blue your mind—and it will absolutely not leave you indifferent. (Annick Mahnert)



BRAWL IN CELL BLOCK 99

2017 | DIR: **S. Craig Zahler** | **132 min** | **USA**

There are no words to describe BRAWL IN CELL BLOCK 99. There is only hyperbole. Words are small for humans, and this film is anything but. No, this is a gigantic behemoth of a freight train of a monster of a film, one so big and outrageously over the top it's hard to comprehend while watching and even harder to fathom post. What opens as a gritty thriller closes with a cacophony of the most hardcore analog violence I've ever experienced in four decades of watching hardcore violence. Ladies and gentleman, it is our esteemed honor to welcome back the brilliantly twisted vision of S. Craig Zahler. BRAWL IN CELL BLOCK 99 follows Bradley Thomas (Vince Vaughn), a former boxer-turned-drug runner who is incarcerated after a deal goes horribly wrong. Sentenced to serve time under the watch of the sadistic Warden Tuggs (Don Johnson), Thomas must fight to stay alive and to protect those he loves.

In anyone else's hands, this narrative could have beaten a pedestrian path but the result here is anything but. For the first hour Zahler flirts with us, deliberately taking his time to establish Vaughn's character and suppressing the monster that lies beneath their conjoined skins, but once they arrive at prison their rage is unleashed... and is it ever a sight to behold. Vaughn metamorphosizes into a killing machine that is part Frankenstein's monster, part shark from JAWS and part monster truck. On Zahler's watch, Vaughn's pugilism is more muscular, physically overpowering and brutally terrifying than anything that has ever preceded. On the heels of his Fantastic Fest closer, BONE TOMAHAWK, Zahler doubles down on all of the things that made his debut a phenomenal ride with a script and direction that is uniquely his own. Much like his first film, he trusts his writing in the hearts and minds of a select few and allows them to wrestle his words to life with the same force and physicality he commits to the page. Every beat calculated, every pause metered, and every action punishing as he drags us into deeper waters before going in for the kill. And what a gloriously savage kill it is. BRAWL IN CELL BLOCK 99 is a bold, fearless and shocking film that will challenge every part of you. (Christian Parkes)



Regional Premiere

BRIMSTONE & GLORY

2017 | DIR: **Viktor Jakovleski** | **67 min** | **Mexico / USA**

There's a small town in Mexico called Tultepec whose entire industry and culture is devoted to fireworks — beautiful, energetic, and dangerous fireworks. You may not be aware of Tultepec by name, but you may know the town through a recent viral internet video in which an explosion at the town's fireworks factory was captured by a passerby on a phone. That incident proved deadly, but the residents of Tultepec wear this danger as a badge like a stuntman who throws himself off of a hundred-story building. Scars are treasured. Disfigurements are regarded as status symbols. Why? It's not just because fireworks in Mexico are a business. There's something more about the love of fireworks in Tultepec. The love is almost religious in nature. Every year, for one glorious week, the town celebrates its love of fireworks with the incredible National Pyrotechnic Festival. The festival is dedicated to a religious figure, John of God. John was a 16th century Portuguese saint who was known for his charity and has become the designated saint of fireworks.

How Tultepec celebrates this festival has to be seen to be believed and trust us, it makes for one of the most incredible cinematic experiences you will ever have. Shot over three years, first-time feature filmmaker Viktor Jakovleski and his cinematographer Tobias von den Borne capture the events of this festival in painstaking and loving detail. Using high speed lenses to record every detail in the most visual way possible, BRIMSTONE & GLORY is a feast for the sentences that can only be truly appreciated in a movie theater.

There are movies that are great because they tell a moving story and there are movies that are great because of the way they can make you feel. BRIMSTONE & GLORY will make you feel wonder like few movies can. It's a special document that will be one of the most memorable experiences in theaters this year. (James Emanuel Shapiro)

PLAYS WITH: **ZARR-DOS** [SEE PG 97]

US Premiere



COLD HELL

2017 | DIR: **Stefan Ruzowitzsky** | **91 min** | **Germany**

Özge (Violetta Schurawlow) is a second-generation Turkish woman living in Vienna where she drives taxis so she can take classes at night and practice Thai kickboxing. Her life was full of challenges even before she witnessed the tail end of a slow, painful murder in an apartment across the alley from hers. After seeing the death of her neighbor and, more importantly, her neighbor's killer seeing her, Özge has a whole new struggle for survival as the killer makes it known he is coming after her.

As Özge desperately searches for help, she quickly learns that she is more on her own than ever. Unable to turn to her own family, the incident puts Özge in the sights of detective Christian Steiner (Tobias Moretti) who cares for his aging father and is not subtle about his distrust of immigrants. Özge and Steiner find their lives thrust together in surprising ways while a madman is on the loose.

Ever-versatile Austrian director Stefan Ruzowitzky is no stranger to genre cinema (ANATOMY) and he also has an Oscar (THE COUNTERFEITERS). In COLD HELL, Ruzowitzky takes a fairly straightforward story of a person thrust unwittingly into a nightmare and makes it something special by filling the film's world with rich characters and narrative layers. Awash in both the colors and shadows of Italian giallo films and the grit and violence of '80s American B-movies, COLD HELL is never anything less than thrilling. Marrying his eye for rich visuals, hard-hitting violence and suspense filled set-pieces with a subtext-laden character-driven narrative, Ruzowitzky has crafted a lean, smart thriller made seemingly specifically for Fantastic Fest's audiences. (Brian Kelley)





US Premiere

THE CURED

2017 | DIR: **David Freyne** | **95 min** | **Ireland / UK / France**

"Not another zombie film!," you'll scream. But THE CURED is not your typical zombie film. A dark drama that returns to the social commentary that birthed the zombie genre with NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, THE CURED is thoughtful and engrossing while not skimping on the Zs.

A zombie apocalypse is averted when a cure is found, and once-ravenous undead cannibals revert to being living people. One former walker receives the cure and gets to rejoin society as part of the third wave of formerly infected beings, coming home to his sister-in-law (the always-amazing Ellen Page) from whom he keeps a devastating secret. It turns out that the cured remember everything they did while infected. And they were not the brainless creatures most films feature; these guys had social behavior and were able to communicate.

The cured are rolled out into society in waves. They are allowed to go back to their families and are given what is supposed to be a second chance at life. But with the memories of the horrible actions they committed branded on their brains and a government that doesn't really give a damn about them and treats them like shit, there is just no real shot for them to heal and get back on their feet.

You can't help but draw a line between the trauma of the cured and the PTSD experienced by soldiers returning from war; once you do, it all falls into place and the story takes on a whole new significance. Tired of being labeled killers, and with no compassion or forgiveness in sight for actions, some of the cured are pushed to retaliation, with catastrophic consequences.

Freyne's first feature, picking up from his short THE FIRST WAVE, shows tremendous maturity and an astute observation of human nature and how society is (mal)functioning. Fear is what usually drives people to do cruel things, and the depiction of fearful people is on point in THE CURED. If there is one message that really emerges from this film, it is that we need to stop being afraid and start caring. (Annick Mahnert)

US Premiere



DAN DREAM

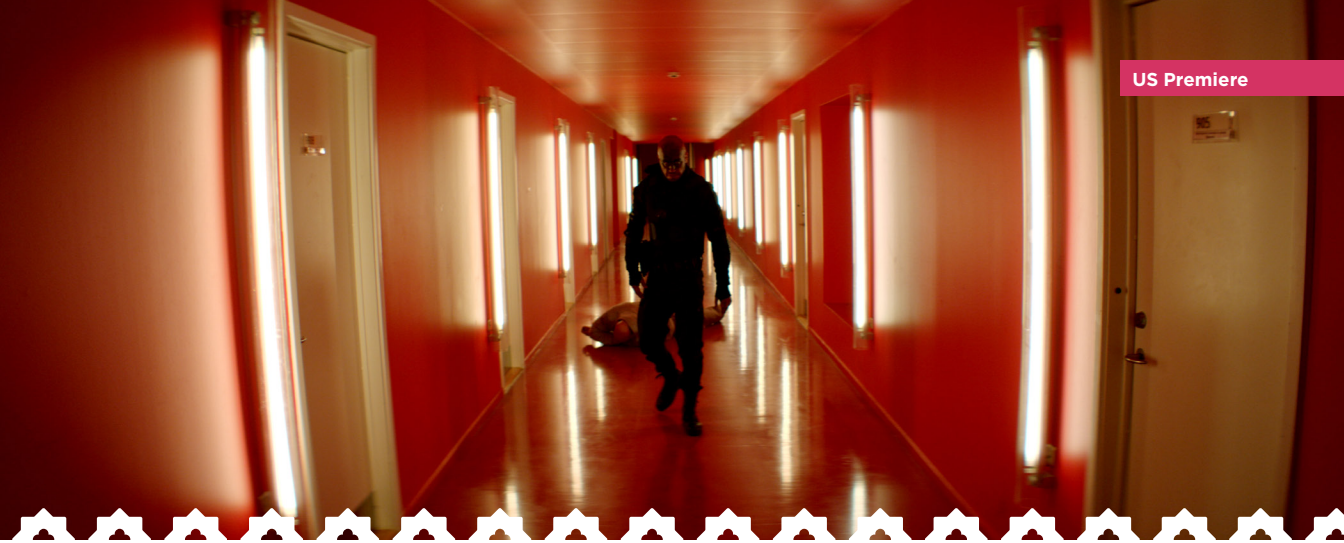
2017 | DIR: **Jesper Rofelt** | **97 min** | **Denmark**

It's the 1980s and the world is a glorious playground of possibility. Technology is the great equalizer and the parade of shiny new products that were considered pure science fiction fantasy just a decade before now promise a world of opportunity for the bold. For the dreamers. For men just like Thorkild. A smooth talker with big dreams and even bigger confidence in his own impending success, Thorkild has seen the future... and it is the electric car.

There's just one problem for Thorkild: His employers neither share his vision nor his confidence in himself. So, it falls to the dreamer to assemble his own team of misfits to join in his grand adventure. Based on the true story of the actual attempt to launch a Danish electric car in the early 1980s — an attempt that literally stalled out at the vehicle's unveiling — DAN DREAM reunites Casper Christensen and Frank Hvam for a wry and witty period comedy.

Christensen and Hvam need little introduction in these parts; they are already well known as the mad duo behind KLOWN. As with their international breakthrough, the filmmakers serve as both screenwriters and stars in DAN DREAM. This is largely where the KLOWN comparisons end. The wit and intelligence of their prior work remains in full force, but are applied to DAN DREAM in very different ways. While KLOWN kicks with furious force at all the most ridiculous aspects of masculinity, DAN DREAM instead casts an almost wistful eye on an idea ahead of its time that was ultimately undone by the cultural forces of conformity and basic human insecurity.

DAN DREAM puts a fascinatingly different spin on the creative team behind it. Having played exaggerated versions of themselves for a decade now in their signature work, Christensen and Hvam show not just a willingness to lose themselves in other characters but a clear skill in doing so while also finding new facets to their signature comedic style. Those looking for the extremity of KLOWN may not find it in DAN DREAM. What they will find instead is a creative team at their peak, who are still finding more aspects of their prodigious skills to explore. (Luke Mullen)



US Premiere

DARKLAND

2017 | DIR: **Fenar Ahmad** | **113 min** | **Denmark**

A movie about revenge that sets aside its exacting for as long as possible, DARKLAND features the kind of deep dive into character that the genre rarely allows. Fenar Ahmad's unsettling second feature delivers explosively on its promise of a realistic masked vigilante, but not before exploring all the loss, guilt and even internal prejudice driving well-to-do doctor Zaid (Dar Salim in an entrancing turn) down a path of both self-destruction and violence against his own people.

Zaid, the son of Iraqi immigrants, has had it good in Denmark. He's a well-respected surgeon and an expectant father living amidst the upper echelons of white European society; he's moved far away from his parents' neighborhood and its local Arab street gangs. His younger brother Yasin wasn't so lucky, stealing and dealing just to stay afloat. He turns to Zaid after getting himself in hot water with his boss, a local weed dealer who answers to a higher power. But the good doctor wants no part of his baby brother's lifestyle, even if it's just a loan to get him out of trouble. That's the life and the community Zaid left behind, but stepping away from Yasin has dire consequences when he ends up beaten to death in a gang-related incident.

Zaid's descent into violence is gradual, born out of both guilt and desperation as he befriends unlikely people, walking a razor sharp wire between the world he lives in and the world he left behind, and alienating his family in the process. DARKLAND is a film where loss is truly felt, one where prejudice and cultural self-hatred are brought to the surface through confrontation, and one where the violence is unsettling; not because it's overtly graphic, but because of the toll it takes on the soul of a man dedicated to saving lives.

It's like watching a realistic, culturally relevant take on BATMAN, but one that's uncomfortably, unrelentingly real and refuses to shy away from the cost of vengeance. (Siddhant Adlakha)

PLAYS WITH: **VIULU** [SEE PG 97]



THE ENDLESS

2017 | DIR: **Justin Benson & Aaron Moorhead** | **111 min** | **USA**

Justin and Aaron are stuck in a rut. Ten years after Justin prompted their escape from a doomsday cult, the duo are cleaning houses to scrape by and surviving on ramen noodles and resentment. When a package arrives with a video from the cult, Aaron convinces Justin to go back and see the people they left behind. The cult members welcome the brothers back with open arms, which is just the first in a series of unsettling red flags. Aaron is enraptured and sees the cult as a refuge from their shitty lives while Justin is wary and concerned about the increasingly strange portents. The campground that the cult calls home is an enigmatic place with mysteries and secrets of its own, which threaten to tear the siblings apart.

Aaron Moorhead and Justin Benson are back with this follow-up to their first film. RESOLUTION was a marvel of micro-budget filmmaking where strong acting and a well-paced story proved far more important than dollars. They went on to make SPRING, a beautiful, lyrical film with its own dark turns that we were proud to include in our 2014 program.

But THE ENDLESS is something else altogether. Taking the basic thread from RESOLUTION and expanding on it, the dynamic duo have crafted an intricate and fascinating treatise on higher powers, what it means to be a family, the nature of time and storytelling, and how integral those things are to our worldview. This is a fiercely personal film that touches on universal truths without giving easy answers. Fearlessly jumping into the lead roles themselves, Benson and Moorhead play off each other wonderfully, letting us feel their uneasy dynamic underscored by the clear bond they have with each other. THE ENDLESS is a tough, thought-provoking and ultimately fascinating film about the stories we tell ourselves, the stories we tell each other and the ways in which these stories can consume us. (Luke Mullen)



North American Premiere

FIRSTBORN

2017 | DIR: **Aik Karapetian** | **90 min** | **Latvia**

In 2014, Aik Karapetian burst into the scene with the eloquently brutal THE MAN IN THE ORANGE JACKET, which was the first horror film out of Latvia. Brimming with tension, it stood out not only in its uniqueness of origin, but also in its beautifully shot aesthetic punctuated by bouts of intense, shocking violence. The film established Karapetian as a filmmaker to watch, and with good reason, because his new feature FIRSTBORN continues to perfect his vision. This time around, Karapetian examines a man's self-perceived masculinity in a multi-layered tale that butterflies from simplistic motivations to a complex puzzle of psychological thrills.

During an evening of partying with their friends, we see the early cracks of doubt that Francis (Kaspars Znotins), a meek architect, has about his beautiful wife Katrina's (Maija Doveika) perception of him. As they play a game of lies, Katrina's descriptive story of lust for another man rings far too true for Francis, planting further seeds of doubt deep within his psyche.

As they journey home from the gathering, Katrina is nearly run down by a man speeding by on a motorcycle, prompting her to yell after him in anger. This confrontation exacerbates the situation with the cyclist, leads to an ugly assault on the couple and further tarnishes their diminishing relationship.

A combination of this initial conflict, Katrina's later pregnancy and deep-seated insecurity sets off a series of events that snowball into murder, blackmail and Francis' discovery of unforeseen and pernicious connections. Will it also awaken the animal instincts that he desires to display to his loving wife?

Karapentian's deft script and direction prevents a heavy handed one-dimensional delivery of what could very well be a standard dramatic tale. FIRSTBORN's cerebral twists continually ramp up in complexity and tension through the use of tonally shifting, string-based musical queues and beautifully framed shots. It shines, not just as an excellent Latvian thriller, but as an outstanding, compelling and complex brain-twister. (Noah Lee)

PLAYS WITH: **NEONATAL** [SEE PG 97]

US Premiere



FIVE FINGERS FOR MARSEILLES

2017 | DIR: **Michael Matthews** | **120 min** | **South Africa**

Years ago, in the heart of the apartheid era, young Tau was a fiery, idealistic boy. Aching to be a man and chafing to be a hero fighting against the injustice on display all around him, Tau and his youthful friends would dream of a life as rebel fighters struggling against oppression. A life as the Five Fingers Of Marseilles.

But real life is seldom as simple as dreams, and dreams have a tendency to corrupt. Years later, Tau still has the fire though the ideals were left behind decades before. Apartheid has gone but justice has not come in its stead and after years of drifting aimlessly, Tau decides it is finally time to come back home to Marseilles. And while he never became the hero he dreamed of, Tau may prove to be exactly the reluctant hero that Marseilles needs.

There is a wave of talent about to crest in South African cinema, a wave that will completely redefine the international perception of what African cinema can be. And right at the vanguard of that wave is director Michael Matthews with his sumptuous western FIVE FINGERS FOR MARSEILLES.

Shot entirely in the Sesotho language and taking enormous advantage of the stunning vistas of South Africa's Eastern Cape, Matthews' debut feature takes the tropes of the classical western and gives them fresh life by transposing them into the murky moral world of post-apartheid South Africa, a country where the idealistic dream of the Rainbow Nation is quickly sliding away into cynicism. There are no true heroes in this world, only varying degrees of corruption, complacency and acceptance. It's a world where the oppressed have become the oppressors and heroism comes accompanied less by ideals than with a baffled sense of “how the hell did we end up here?” It is a gorgeous, complex world and one of the most striking debuts of recent years. (Todd Brown)



GEMINI

2017 | DIR: **Aaron Katz** | **93 min** | **USA**

The Los Angeles of GEMINI is beautiful. Bathed in the glow of fluorescent lights and the exquisiteness of Hollywood, it's the same beauty found in recent neo-noir entries like DRIVE and NIGHTCRAWLER, and what we experienced in classics like Mann's HEAT and Hill's THE DRIVER. The beauty isn't just a feast for our eyes, but the meat that GEMINI's narrative is built on. The intoxicating beauty of celebrity and the beautiful celebrities themselves are the focus of this whodunnit from Aaron Katz (LAND HO; COLD WEATHER).

Heather (Zoe Kravitz) is a movie star, but unhappy. She doesn't have a private life and she's stalked everywhere by fans and paparazzi. Her only anchor to reality is her personal assistant, Jill (Lola Kirke from MISTRESS AMERICA). When the two of them are involved in a dark crime at the end of act one, Katz's neo-noir intentions come fully into focus. Jill is both on the run and out to find the meaning behind the crime. Everyone's a suspect, every line is a clue and nothing is what it seems.

GEMINI may be a terrific noir in the most traditional sense of the genre, but it's also an incredibly smart examination of celebrity culture in LA. One oddity of this culture has always been the role of the personal assistant. Once you hit that level of success where you need a P.A., that person does nearly everything for you. The celebrity isn't just fully dependent on their P.A., but they can completely lose their own identity when they cede their ability to do anything — shopping, scheduling, driving, etc. Their identity morphs and bends into some strange combination of the two personalities.

Thankfully, Katz rightfully discovered this phenomenon is fertile ground for a noir narrative. GEMINI plays with this and gives us the most memorable mystery of the year. (James Emanuel Shapiro)

North American and World Premiere



GENERATION B

2017 | DIR: **Pieter Van Hees** | **210 min** | **Belgium**

It was on a Wednesday — or maybe a Thursday — that everything changed. Belgium's vaunted credit rating was slashed dramatically, downgraded all the way from a lofty AA+ to a B, and suddenly everything went to shit. The older generation still had whatever they had in tangible assets, sure, but the strain was obvious and nobody who managed to keep a job was going to leave it any time soon. And the younger generation? Well, they were left with whatever scraps they could find.

Thrown into this mess is Jonas, a pleasantly bland young man who grew up in privilege but with no useful skills whatsoever. Chronically unemployed, Jonas' life came crashing down when his girlfriend — the provider of the pair — left him, rendering him both broke and homeless. His only option seems to be an underpaid, illegal job in a call center and renting an overly expensive couch in an overcrowded apartment with a beautiful hacker and chronically naked anarchist plotting revolution against the baby boomers. His only hope? Get his girlfriend to take him back. Or, perhaps, a fresh handout from mom and dad.

Like all the best social satire, GENERATION B takes an all too real premise — rising student debts and rampant underemployment for even the best and brightest of the young generation — and pushes it out to ludicrous extremes. Pieter Van Hees (known in these parts for ultra-serious efforts LEFT BANK and WASTE LAND) takes gleeful delight in jabbing his finger into the eye of both the entitled upper classes and the aimless drift of entitled youth coming to realize there may be nothing left to be entitled to. The results are sometimes painful, often bizarre and consistently hilarious. GENERATION B is a comedy for those members of the Occupy generation who would love nothing more than to sell out... if only there was someone to sell out to. (Todd Brown)



US Premiere

GERALD'S GAME

2017 | DIR: **Mike Flanagan** | **103 min** | **USA**

At first glance, GERALD'S GAME might not seem like an ideal choice for a movie adaptation. After all, the terrific book by Stephen King is largely thrust forward through the internal monologues of its lead character, who spends most of her time handcuffed to a bed.

But this is exactly the kind of setup that seems to inspire Mike Flanagan to be as inventive as possible. Without losing the feel of the story and with the help of his two terrific lead performers, Flanagan opens up the story without ever compromising it.

The setup is simple. Jessie (Carla Gugino) and her husband Gerald are on a weekend getaway to see if they can inject some much needed excitement into their stale marriage. However, a bedroom fantasy goes wrong and soon Gerald's dead and Jessie... well, she's handcuffed to the bed. Now Jessie's only aim is to survive.

There are plenty of surprises in what might seem like a tame story and the film also features perhaps the most wince-inducing sequence in any Fantastic Fest film this year. But more than that, GERALD'S GAME features two towering, amazing performances. Carla Gugino is revelatory as not only Jessie, but also the facets of Jessie's personality that all appear in one form or another. As Gerald, Bruce Greenwood shows that he can do mean as well as the best of them. For a film relying so heavily on two performers, it's a testament to Mike Flanagan's talent that the pace never falters and you never lose interest in what's going on.

This is a Stephen King story and there are, of course, plenty of surprises and developments that all work towards a beautiful finale. If you're a fan of the book, you're definitely in for a surprise. If you're a fan of Flanagan, this is yet another notch on the talented director's belt. And if you're a fan of smart, subversive, character-based horror, you're in for one hell of a ride. (Evrim Ersoy)

Regional Premiere



GILBERT

2017 | DIR: **Neil Berkeley** | **99 min** | **USA**

Chances are, even someone who doesn't immediately recognize the name would know Gilbert Gottfried through his role in films like PROBLEM CHILD or the use of his voice in Disney's ALADDIN, or maybe even through the news reports on the controversial joke that saw him stop voicing the Aflac duck.

But these facets are part of a very complex man whose real personality lies much, much deeper. And with unrestricted access, director Neil Berkeley manages to carve out a portrait of the man who turns out to be much, much different from what any of us would expect.

Whether it's Gilbert's relationship with his wife and daughters or his devotion to his wonderful mother and sisters, what shines through is the compassion of a man who's clearly more comfortable in discomforting others than displaying his emotions. Gilbert himself, dressed in a white robe at his own apartment, seems more unguarded and relaxed than he has ever appeared before, and it's these moments that go a long way to explain how someone can combine so many conflicting personalities into one mind. Impressions of the man are provided by fellow comics, actors and colleagues who simply shine when telling stories about him.

Shot unintrusively, almost like a home video meant for private eyes, GILBERT is a wonderful, touching documentary that manages to eke out laughs through real emotion. By drawing the complex portrait of a man in the public eye, the film demonstrates that underneath it all, we are very similar.

I dare anyone to not laugh or get a tear in their eye during this incredible portrait that finally demonstrates in the simplest way possible why Gottfried should be regarded as a national icon; a complex flawed being trying to live life the best way possible. (Evrim Ersoy)



North American Premiere

GOOD MANNERS

2017 | DIR: **Juliana Rojas & Marco Dutra** | **135 min** | **Brazil / France**

GOOD MANNERS, a gothic fairytale for adults, is the new feature from the brilliant minds of Juliana Rojas and Marco Dutra, whose previous feature HARD LABOR demonstrated the economic inequality prevalent in Brazil through the downfall of a family. What really set that film apart was the clever use of genre language including a crumbling wall that acted as a metaphor for the misfortunes that kept occurring.

With GOOD MANNERS, their sense of social justice and quiet exploration of the gap between rich and poor remains as vibrant and intelligent as ever, but they've really upped the stakes by the beautiful inclusion of what can only be called old school movie magic.

Clara, lonely and desperate, arrives at an upscale apartment building to attend an interview for the job of a live-in nanny. The interviewer is Ana, a heavily pregnant young woman who is also very isolated. Although the difference in these women's classes and backgrounds are undeniable, Ana decides to hire Clara and a friendship slowly begins to develop between the two. Clara has some dark and broken secrets but so does Ana. As the two open up more to each other, their worlds become inevitably linked.

To reveal any more would be a disservice to perhaps the most tender, humane and surprising film of the festival. From the magnificent matte painting backdrops that bring Brazil to life to the use of lullaby songs, GOOD MANNERS is a master class from two filmmakers clearly at the top of their game. The film meticulously blends both real and fantasy worlds to mesmerising effect. Make no mistake; to experience GOOD MANNERS on the big screen is to be in the presence of wondrous filmmaking that is guaranteed to make you talk afterwards. (Evrim Ersoy)

World Premiere



HAGAZUSSA – A HEATHEN'S CURSE

2017 | DIR: **Lukas Feigelfeld** | **102 min** | **Germany**

It's quite an achievement for an almost entirely silent film to effectively trigger so many emotions in its audience. HAGAZUSSA's story, although very simple, is supported by nuanced and subtle performances and absolutely breathtaking cinematography that highlights snow-covered landscapes, sun-dappled woods and misty mountainsides dotted with wildflowers. And the sound design... oh, the sound design... is quiet (until it isn't) but astonishingly evocative.

HAGAZUSSA follows a young goatherd living alone in a mountain hut and intuiting a dark presence in the oppressive woods that surround her. As she grapples with uncertainty, so does the audience. Are these nightmarish visions the product of a deluded mind or a supernatural force of evil?

The knowledge that HAGAZUSSA's director Lukas Feigelfeld studied photography before switching to film and that HAGAZUSSA is not only his first feature but actually his graduation project from film school — he attended Deutsche Film-und Fernsehakademie Berlin — is enough to make you fall right out of your chair. This film is a genuine piece of German gothic, a macabre, atmospheric treasure quite unlike anything we've seen in the past years. With its black goat and aproned protagonist, some will certainly end up comparing the film to another festival favorite released last year that I refuse to name, but the strength of HAGAZUSSA resides in its singular concept and execution. It's notable that HAGAZUSSA's story takes place in the Austrian Alps, reminding us that even the most remote places in Europe suffered from the paranoid and superstitious beliefs associated with its time period.

Feigelfeld delivers an impressive and haunting first feature that sets the bar very high for European Fantastique. Count on it: HAGAZUSSA certainly won't be the last you'll hear from this filmmaker. (Annick Mahnert)



World Premiere

HAUNTERS: THE ART OF THE SCARE

2017 | DIR: **Jon Schnitzer** | **88 min** | **USA**

Americans love a good scare at Halloween and nothing quite does it like a haunted house. Almost unique to this country, haunted houses carefully traverse the ground between naff and brilliant. However, as always, there's so much more to the story than meets the eye.

HAUNTERS is perhaps the most comprehensive documentary anyone's ever going to need on the subject. Starting with the history of haunted houses, the film travels the entire gamut, including their inception, their evolution and even their future. Rather than deliver a dull history lesson, each clever development is illustrated by an enlightening array of interviews with some of the most fascinating people within this niche industry. Haunters who create and build houses which are in turn smart, scary and controversial, who act out the roles of the monsters sometimes as relief and sometimes as escape, as well as the people who visit year after year. The film also touches on the psychology of fear: why we crave it, how we avoid it and how these sideshow attractions fit into the overall picture.

A joy to watch from start to finish, HAUNTERS is a rare example of a documentary that boasts both an interesting subject matter and the personalities to support it. From the dedication of Shar Mayer to the controversial figure of Russ McKamey, HAUNTERS is stuffed to the gills with fascinating characters who offer unique insights into this rarely explored world.

Jon Schnitzer has an uncanny eye for capturing interesting interviewees and stories that both amuse and engage. Whether you're a haunted house fan or someone with zero knowledge, HAUNTERS creates the groundwork for you to be 100% fascinated with them by the time it's over. Who knows? Maybe it will even inspire you to create your own haunted house this October. (Evrim Ersoy)

PLAYS WITH: **YOUR DATE IS HERE** [SEE PG 97]



ICHI THE KILLER

2001 | DIR: **Takashi Miike** | **129 min** | **Japan**

It's back! Takashi Miike's notorious breakthrough has landed at Fantastic Fest with a glorious, eye-popping 4K restoration approved by the master himself!

For those who have never encountered the crazy world of ICHI THE KILLER, here's the chance to see where our love affair with Miike started. It's a crazed journey through the world of Yakuza with outrageous characters and grim violence, all used to comment on society's obsession with violent imagery.

Kakihara is the sadomasochistic enforcer of Anjo, and when his boss disappears with 300 million yen, Kakihara is responsible for locating him. Creating the most violent path possible through Tokyo, Kakihara brutalizes and maims many people until he discovers the truth, all while looking for the perfect arch enemy who can fulfill him with pain and violence. He just might get his wish in the form of Ichi: a seemingly shy young man who turns into a full-blooded, psychotic killer when sexually aroused. It's only a matter of time before the two men encounter each other in the bloodbath of the Tokyo gang scene, and when they do, worlds collide in an explosion of bodily fluids.

Based on the notorious manga by Hideo Yamamoto, Miike's adaptation is both loyal and uniquely his own. The extravagant visual style he developed with his Yakuza trilogy translates here into a warped vision of Tokyo where men are all monsters and sadism is a way of life. Drawing incredible performances from his two leads, Tadanobu Asano and Nao Omori, Miike creates a world that is both sickening and enticing.

It's no exaggeration to say there has never been (nor will there ever be) another film like ICHI THE KILLER, a full-blown accusation of the audience's implication in violence, a visual masterpiece and a technicolor nightmare of ever-smarter sadism. So join us in celebrating this brilliant film as it has never been seen before on the big screen. (Evrim Ersoy)



US Premiere

JAILBREAK

2017 | DIR: **Jimmy Henderson** | **92 min** | **Cambodia**

The all-female Butterfly Gang have long been the scourge of Cambodia, their fingers in seemingly every criminal enterprise imaginable. When the police manage to capture their lone male member — a simpering dandy known as Playboy — they know this is their opportunity to bring the whole enterprise down. So Playboy is shipped off to the most secure prison in the nation for safekeeping.

But, of course, no prison is unreachable for the Butterfly Gang, and it takes barely a heartbeat for things to go wrong. Eager to earn the favor of the powerful gang, the prisoners start a riot with rival factions struggling to be the one to silence Playboy before he has the chance to speak with a small squad of police trapped inside, trying desperately to save both his life and their own.

With the burgeoning film culture of Southeast Asia and an increasing number of nations developing local language film industries, Cambodia is very much a nation on the rise. Levels of production are up with local storytellers exploring an increasingly wide range of styles and genres. Thus, we have JAILBREAK, not only the first Cambodian film ever to be selected at Fantastic Fest but also the first true martial arts film ever made in the history of the country.

Local martial arts style bokator is front and center here. There are obvious similarities to muay thai, though a very good number of differences as well. Film stars Dara Our and Tharoth Sam are both highly trained in the art with both on national level exhibition teams, Tharoth being one of a handful of Cambodian women to fight professionally. And showcasing that skill is the raw, energetic choreography from Our and imported star Jean-Paul Ly — a French-born, Chinese-Cambodian stuntman and fighter whose credits include LUCY and DOCTOR STRANGE — that quite simply never lets up. (Todd Brown)

PLAYS WITH: **THE DROP-IN** [SEE PG 96]

US Premiere



JUNK HEAD

2017 | DIR: **Takahide Hori** | **114 min** | **Japan**

Stop-motion animation is meant to feel intimate, which Takahide Hori's debut feature absolutely does, but what JUNK HEAD also achieves despite the limits of its form is a sense of humongous scale and grandeur.

The human race is at the end of its rope, our engineered longevity having rendered us infertile. Our last remaining hope lies within the DNA we left behind, now residing in vast caverns far beneath the surface. The key to our survival rests with making contact with our forgotten tribes for the first time in over a millennium.

Like most good science fiction, JUNK HEAD lives and breathes in its details. From the injuries of the robotic human venturing into the Earth's core, to the ranks of varied mutant clones who fix him up with a newer, friendlier face, to the winding worn-out hallways of the dimly-lit industrial subterrain, housing both a new kind of people and new kinds of monsters. These creatures alternate from friendly to deadly, including ones that turn into trees, and ones that defecate in ways you've never seen.

While his unsettling creature designs evoke H.R. Giger, Hori's living dioramas are also imbued with pulsating electronica as the sets whiz past during fights and chases. Yet he retains a sense of whimsy about his action figure-like creations and the intricate ways in which they're humanized, augmenting partial gibberish with familiar gestures and a sense of comedic physicality in a story of unwitting Gods crossing paths with their estranged creations.

Based on the director's award-winning short of the same name, JUNK HEAD is the culmination of eight years of creative vision. It's the kind of animated marvel you don't often see; an amusing world you wish you could walk into, that also happens to be a uniquely touching meditation on existence and mortality. (Siddhant Adlakha)



North American Premiere

JUPITER'S MOON

2017 | DIR: **Kornél Mundruczó** | **123 min** | **Hungary / Germany**

Opening with a bravura one-shot chase sequence through the forest as immigrants arriving in Hungary are hounded by the police, Kornél Mundruczó's follow-up to WHITE GOD soon becomes a searing science fiction thriller with the most precise social conscience. Drawing upon the current political climate, Mundruczó marries the classic Eastern Europe thriller with futurism while liberally dosing the entire thing with observations about human nature that are only going to ring more true with passing time.

Aryan is a refugee who gains the power to levitate after being shot. He is a perfect foil for Stern, a disgraced corrupt doctor. As soon as the two meet, Stern sees a way to exploit Aryan to make money while Aryan finds in Stern his only hope of ever connecting with the people he was told to find. But as the the two progress through a city divided by both corruption and a changing political landscape, they develop a tentative friendship which will have deep consequences for both of them.

With a color palette that's reminiscent of Hungarian thrillers of the '80s and '90s, JUPITER'S MOON creates a landscape that is both of now and an alternate future, where everything feels old and detached, from the buildings to the people that inhabit them. Kata Wéber's cinematography uses a kinetic handheld style to keep the audience in the thick of the action and the choice pays dividends in multiple set-pieces that range from a chase in the city to a fire fight in a hotel with an incredible sense of energy and momentum. Add to this the fact that the special effects are mainly old-school (only occasionally enhanced by CGI), and you have a science fiction epic that is unlike any other film.

Full of intelligence, wit and visual daring, JUPITER'S MOON is the sort of feature that makes you sit up and pay attention to the talent behind it, and serves as more proof that Kornél Mundruczó is a talent to follow, whatever he may bring to the big screen next. (Evrim Ersoy)

World Premiere



JUVENILE

2017 | DIR: **Bradley Buecker** | **87 min** | **USA**

Billy spends his evenings jacking cars. He learns the trade from his best friend Mikey, who's a decidedly poor influence in his life. Billy is an intelligent and troubled youth on the edge. He's boiling over with emotion. He lashes out at school and at his mother and stepfather. He's attempting to come to grips with his lower class station in life, being abandoned by his father and facing a seemingly hopeless future. Only Billy's connection to his girlfriend Jennifer and her tight-knit family brings out his sweeter, more human side. The relationship keeps him grounded and shows him that there may be a better way forward. Can Billy embrace love or will his tumultuous relationship with Mikey derail his future plans and send him down the bleak path that he seems destined to travel?

JUVENILE — penned by and starring Blake Jenner (GLEE; EVERYBODY WANTS SOME) — is a raw, fierce portrait of an angry young man on the cusp of adulthood with everything to lose and much to gain. Melissa Benoist (SUPERGIRL; GLEE) shines as the lifeboat of Billy's world, lending a compassionate, affecting performance as Billy's girlfriend who lives a stable life, surrounded by her large family and maintaining a more gentle outlook on life. Bradley Buecker, a long time collaborator with producer Ryan Murphy, makes his feature film directing debut in a surprisingly fresh and emotionally powerful take on the "youth gone wild" genre.

The indie film market seems to be flooded with similar tales but JUVENILE rises tall above the crowd with both Jenner's tightly woven script and his emotionally intense performance that anchors the heart of the film. Paired with the creative direction from Buecker, JUVENILE not only looks amazing but courses with an acute sense of the emotionality of adolescence while maintaining a down-to-earth magnetic sensibility. (Noah Lee)



US Premiere

THE KILLING OF A SACRED DEER

2017 | DIR: **Yorgos Lanthimos** | **120 min** | **Ireland / United Kingdom**

Yorgos Lanthimos' latest film is an almost uncategorizable journey into the heart of darkness. Both a thriller and a parable, THE KILLING OF A SACRED DEER creates a disquieting world of horrors that strike at the heart of the calm of suburbia.

Colin Farrell is Steven, a brilliant neurosurgeon whose clinical attitude extends to his personal life. His interactions with his family feel almost as regimented as the post-surgery conversations he has with his colleagues.

But Steven also has a strange friendship with a 16-year-old named Martin who, on the surface, is an awkward friendly teenager who cherishes Steven's company.

Things take a bizarre turn when Martin tries to bring Steven into his family. When his attempts fail, he gives Steven a frightening proposition, a choice which will determine who lives and who dies.

Set in the same dry, clinical world of Lanthimos' previous films, SACRED DEER represents a departure for a director who chooses to bring new horrors which hitherto had remained in check. If DOGTOOTH was the family microcosm as a prison and THE LOBSTER was a satire on relationships, THE KILLING OF A SACRED DEER is a treatise on the evil of inaction, a brutal dissection of logic and rationalism and their failure in the face of the impossible.

Blessed with amazing performances from the uniformly great cast, THE KILLING OF A SACRED DEER asks ever more difficult moral questions which no one is able to answer, but does so without ever losing sight of its dry, droll humor. Add to the mix the incredible sound design, eye-catching cinematography and perhaps the best appearance ever by Alicia Silverstone, and you have something very special.

Guaranteed to spark debate, this extraordinary film will be the one title everyone will be talking about long after the festival is over. Do not miss this chance!. (Evrim Ersoy)

US Premiere



KING COHEN

2017 | DIR: **Steve Mitchell** | **104 min** | **USA**

There are many mavericks in the history of American independent cinema but there is only one Larry Cohen. Called “the John Cassavetes of exploitation” by another free-spirited figure of genre cinema, Joe Dante, Cohen's numerous memorable films spanning three decades are recognizable by their guerrilla style and the larger-than-life performances by his actors. From BONE and BLACK CAESAR to Q THE WINGED SERPENT, GOD TOLD ME TO, IT'S ALIVE and THE STUFF, Cohen has always left his unmissable mark on every genre of film he's touched. And now the man who has been telling stories for a living since 1960 is finally having his own told.

KING COHEN is a seriously fun celebration and comprehensive history of one of the medium's great artists. From his early start in television, Cohen has been an unstoppable idea man and a talented writer. Once he got a taste for direction, the world was truly forever blessed with his unique brand of filmmaking. Shooting guerilla-style on the streets of New York and performing stunts before asking his actors to do so, Cohen's raw energy and brilliant imagination has left an imprint on cinema. It's no wonder so many of his incredible peers would eagerly sit down to pay tribute to this one-of-a-kind filmmaker.

Featuring an impressive roster of interviews including J.J. Abrams, Yaphet Kotto, John Landis, Traci Lords and Robert Forster, KING COHEN is a documentary befitting a man of Cohen's legacy. There are few filmmakers who have so consistently and thoroughly defined a period of moviemaking as Cohen has with exploitation cinema, and entire generations of genre fans have grown up with his work. We here at Fantastic Fest couldn't be more excited to share KING COHEN with those lifetime fans and new ones he'll certainly have after watching. (Brian Kelley)



US Premiere

LES AFFAMES

2017 | DIR: **Robin Aubert** | **100 min** | **Canada**

Proving that even in the very popular zombie subgenre there's still a lot of interesting and new things to say, Robin Aubert's LES AFFAMES does not so much reinvent anything as realign.

The time is now. The setting is the provincial Quebec countryside. In quick fashion, we are introduced to the survivors of a plague: a businesswoman with an odd bloodlust, a young man who seems to have adjusted to the idea of this ongoing apocalypse, and a young boy from a local farm who seems to be wracked with guilt. All are trying to survive in this reality that has come out of nowhere, and slowly but surely, their paths cross. Their journey together will lead them to understand both the plague and each other, and the answers they find will not be easy or pleasant.

Aubert's take on the zombie myth is full of local flavor. His understanding of the Québécois countryside translates into stunning, surreal images and he creates a new sub-breed of genre with his take on the Canadian flesh eaters who are as dazed and confused by the survivors that surround them.

The structure of the film mimics the journey of its ragtag group of characters who run the gamut of Canadian society. Their interactions reflect the political systems in play and act as almost archaic reminders of what is being eroded by this new threat. As their journey continues, images start to repeat, surreal encounters weave in and out of the plot, and a general sense of loss affects not just the characters but the meta-structure of the actual film.

Cleverly utilizing the natural isolation of the countryside and mining an eerie soundtrack to great effect, LES AFFAMES traps us in isolation in Quebec in the most frightening way possible. By forcing us to face our own reactions and attitudes, it reinforces the frightening idea that the greatest danger to us may not be external forces but the monsters we keep breeding within ourselves. (Evrim Ersoy)

US Premiere



LET THE CORPSES TAN

2017 | DIR: **Hélène Cattet & Bruno Forzani** | **92 min** | **Belgium / France**

Cattet and Forzani are two of the most interesting filmmakers working today. With their debut AMER, they distilled the giallo into its purest form, delighting both purists and newcomers. With THE STRANGE COLOR OF YOUR BODY'S TEARS, they introduced experimentation in form to the mix, creating a world like no other. And now, with LET THE CORPSES TAN, they bring their visual style to an adaptation of one of the great pulp novels.

The plot is seemingly simple. Rhino and his men are camped at a run-down villa on the outskirts of the Mediterrenean run by a formidable landlady and her partner. The place has seen better days; once the playground for orgies and wild parties, it now sits quiet and rotting. For some, this is a disappointing place, but for Rhino, it's the perfect hideout. Because Rhino has a plan: he and his men have executed a pitch perfect robbery by grabbing 250 kilograms of gold. Now all they have to do is get back and wait until they can split it.

But nothing is ever that simple. The arrival of some unexpected guests turn this idyllic corner of the Mediterranean into a battleground. Get ready for the ultimate war for survival between crooks and crooked souls!

Visually stunning, expertly edited with multiple timelines and featuring killer sound design, LET THE CORPSES TAN is perhaps the most cinematic of all experiences at this year's festival. Full of clever touches, excess gun violence and the most vibrant palette this side of Technicolor, this blood-soaked daytime nightmare is something that once experienced will never be forgotten. LET THE CORPSES TAN is a love letter filled with innovation, an adaptation that highlights the economy of storytelling and a crazy fever dream that fills you with glee. All this and more, LET THE CORPSES TAN is a masterpiece. (Evrim Ersoy)



US Premiere

LETTERKENNY

2016 | DIR: **Jacob Tierney** | **151 min** | **Canada**

The image is a pure, small town idyll: a strapping young man, well groomed, plaid shirt carefully tucked into his jeans gazes into camera. His thumbs thrust into belt loops, the cattle pens behind him serving as a backdrop for what could be a perfect representation of American farm life, if not for the fact that this is (very much) Canada. And then he speaks:

"You heard some city gals talking about paying to get their pubic hair ripped out with wax. Tell you what, grab a cow by the tail and they'll kick you in the box for free if that's what you're into."

It was 2013, and this was the introduction of Jared Keeso as Wayne in LETTERKENNY PROBLEMS, a series of YouTube shorts that became a viral phenomenon north of the border in 2013. The formula was this: Wayne and farming compatriot Darryl (Nathan Dales) look straight into the camera and deliver in perfectly deadpan fashion the daily problems and confusions of country farm folk relative to their big city cousins and the various other factions of rural life. It's simple. It's hysterical. And, as anyone who has grown up anywhere outside of a major city will tell you, it is freakishly accurate. It's now also an ongoing television series that has become a legitimate phenomenon in Canada, crossing the border for the first time now as we present the series at Fantastic Fest.

The transition to series has been a remarkably smooth one. The cast has expanded slightly, with more room given to supporting players, and director Jacob Tierney (GOOD NEIGHBOURS; THE TROTSKY) bringing sure hand with long form storytelling. But the core remains resolutely the interplay between Keeso's Wayne, Dales' Darryl and their dry-as-a-desert delivery of the most outrageous monologues and one-liners imaginable. This is a comedy classic just waiting to be discovered by the rest of the world. (Todd Brown)

North American Premiere



THE LINE

2017 | DIR: **Peter Bebjak** | **112 min** | **Slovakia / Ukraine**

Adam Krajnak is the head of an organized crime family that operate on a border, dealing in guns, cigarettes, even illegal immigrants. Everything but narcotics. He's loyal to his men and puts his family above all else. When Slovakia becomes part of the Schengen area, Adam's business is threatened by the new border laws. Add to the mix his daughter's impending marriage, his partner beginning to rebel and an old enemy threatening him, and a perfect storm starts to brew.

Peter Bebjak's entry into the gangster genre may have elements of familiarity. but assured direction and flawless acting push it to the top of its class. Boasting an unusual locale and borrowing heavily from headlines in today's world news, Bebjak melds politics into gangsters and clashes it violently with a very Eastern European focus on family, creating a story that is fresh as it is violent. Tomá Matalír's performance as Adam is both terrifying and charismatic; his imposing physical presence is used to electric effect as he tears through the harshness of his crumbling reality.

A success on home ground, THE LINE heralds the arrival of a new voice who's crafting something unexpected from familiar elements. Do not miss the chance to engage with what is one of the most thrilling, visceral experiences of the entire year. (Evrim Ersoy)



Texas Premiere

LOVE AND SAUCERS

2017 | DIR: **Brad Abrahams** | **67 min** | **USA / Canada**

After reading a description of LOVE AND SAUCERS, your first reaction would probably be a smile and a compassionate slap on the shoulder of our lead David Huggins, a man who supposedly lost his virginity to an extraterrestrial being, leading to a longtime interspecies romantic relationship. And no one would blame you for doing so.

Huggins, now 72 years old, claims to have been in contact with these otherworldly beings over the course of his entire life, turning to art to express and immortalize his (sexual) encounters, encouraged by the extraterrestrial to do so. His art is surreal, simple and almost childish. But the moments Huggins has chosen to put on canvas are fascinating and intriguing and correspond to very specific events in his life.

The strength of Brad Abraham's documentary resides in the fact that it manages to change your view on Huggins, turning probable disbelief into tolerance and even acceptance. Abraham depicts the portrait of a rather charming man who genuinely and truthfully believes the extraordinary events that happened to him, cleverly avoiding the pitfalls of portraying Huggins as a madman and at the same time skillfully raising the question of who we are to judge another person's beliefs. After being briefly introduced to other people at an art gallery who are deeply fascinated and seem to fully assimilate Huggin's experiences, we end up asking ourselves: What if there really is someone else out there? What if we missed out and David Huggins is actually the lucky one?

A beautiful and humane documentary, LOVE AND SAUCERS portrays the intimate world of an artist who is just a little bit different than the norm. A joyous, beautiful experience. (Annick Mahnert)

PLAYS WITH: **THE DUNDEE PROJECT / UFO DAYS**
[SEE PG 96 / 97]

North American Premiere



MARY AND THE WITCH'S FLOWER

2017 | DIR: **Hiromasa Yonebayashi** | **102 min** | **Japan**

As the first film out of former Studio Ghibli producer Yoshiaki Nishimura's new Studio Ponoc, MARY AND THE WITCH'S FLOWER serves as a dazzling and heartwarming introduction to a new powerhouse in the world of animation. Directed by Hiromasa Yonebayashi (who helmed THE SECRET WORLD OF ARRIETTY and WHEN MARNIE WAS THERE for Ghibli and served as key animator on several Miyazaki features), the film is an adaptation of Mary Stewart's 1971 magic-filled coming-of-age children's book THE LITTLE BROOMSTICK. Those looking for a bit of respite from exploding faces, gratuitous nudity and blood-soaked tales of revenge should make their way to MARY AND THE WITCH'S FLOWER for a healthy dose of good feels.

Mary is trying to find her footing after moving to the countryside to live with her great aunt. She does her best to try and help her great aunt out — failing miserably — and finds herself overshadowed by Peter who is one of the only other kids her age in town. Something incredible finally happens to plain ol' Mary when a cat leads her to a beautiful glowing flower and a broomstick in the woods. Whisked away to a school for witches where she is quickly praised for her newfound, strangely impressive powers, Mary basks in the attention until she makes some disturbing discoveries about a few of her teachers.

MARY AND THE WITCH'S FLOWER is a high-energy spectacle of color and sound. Yonebayashi lets every bit of his childlike imagination turn a story of a girl who is very ordinary into something that is anything but. Mary's journey into the world of witchcraft is bright and beautiful to behold, a true big screen experience that fulfills childhood fantasies of the extravagance of the sight of magic, all wielded by a little girl who, until now, thought her life and herself to be nothing special. MARY AND THE WITCH'S FLOWER is a joyous film full of wonder and we can't wait to see what Studio Ponoc does next. (Brian Kelley)



World Premiere

MAUS

2017 | DIR: **Yayo Herrero** | **90 min** | **Spain**

Alec and Sasa are a couple in love on a trip to the heart of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Sasa is uneasy about being back in a place she thought she'd permanently escaped. Her instincts tell her that they are surrounded by something evil. As they go deeper into the forest and their car breaks down, Sasa clings deeply to her hamajlija — a Muslim amulet — to keep her safe. However it's not long before the couple run into two hunters, Vuk and Milos. It's this encounter that will be the reckoning for all four people, but the results will be nothing like anyone could have imagined.

Yayo Herrero's arrival on the horror scene is this gut-punch of a film, which operates on so many layers that it will take multiple viewings to decipher its commentary. On one hand, the story of Alec and Sasa is a familiar setting: a couple in love stranded in the woods. Their encounter with the huntsmen pushes further into familiar territory as paranoia, betrayal and violence rear their ugly heads.

However, there's another element which plays with all of our expectations; Sasa is a Muslim survivor of the brutal war in the region and the huntsmen are Serbian. So instead of the usual good versus evil cliches, Herrero provides a master class in the art of miscommunication and misunderstanding. As reality blurs, we're never sure about the true intentions of any of the characters. Add to this the fact that Alec is German — a nice European boy who is both polite and out of his element — and the film opens up to multiple types of readings. As the story expands, it takes into account a much larger picture; it is both an examination of the state of the nation and a horror story. The forest becomes a prison for all the characters who desperately fight against their own prejudices and try not to repeat the mistakes of the past. It's this fight that Yayo Herrero is most interested in exploring with his sharp eye.

It's not an exaggeration to suggest that if any film at Fantastic Fest deserves and requires debate and discussion, MAUS is that film. One thing is certain: MAUS marks the arrival of a major new talent whose unique voice is definitely something to highlight and celebrate. (Evrim Ersoy)



North American Premiere



THE MERCILESS

2017 | DIR: **Byun Sung-hyun** | **117 min** | **South Korea**

Young pretty boy Jo Hyun-su catches the eye of veteran gangster Han Jae-ho during a slap fight at Gyeonggi Penitentiary, where both are guests of the state. Jo's boyish good looks give him a sense of naivete that he trades on and uses to quickly turn the tables on those who underestimate him. Han works for a fish importing business that's really a drug-smuggling front run by Chairman Ko. This is a huge thorn in the side of police chief Cheon, a tough-as-nails female cop who goes toe-to-toe with Ko. On the inside, Han takes control of the cigarette trade by force and lives like a prince behind bars. But when Kim Sung-han arrives, all hell breaks loose. Kim and the prison warden are old friends and suddenly Han's reign is over; there's a new sheriff in town. But Jo sticks by Han's side and even saves his life from a shiv attack by one of Kim's underlings. A friendship slowly begins to form between the two criminals. This friendship lasts beyond their years in prison but nothing is exactly what it seems in the brutal Korean underworld.

While Byun Sung-hyun's sprawling epic crime saga liberally borrows from films like the INFERNAL AFFAIRS series, it still manages to put its own spin on familiar storylines. With slap fights as a central plot point, the film feels right at home at Fantastic Fest. The action is hard-hitting and relentless. The revenge is brutal and final. THE MERCILESS is shot with style and gusto. The film is edited in nonlinear chunks that jump back and forth through the timeline, which gives us glimpses of the character's true motivations. THE MERCILESS is a dynamic and kinetic rollercoaster ride through shaky alliances and double crosses where no one is safe. (Luke Mullen)



US Premiere

MOM AND DAD

2017 | DIR: **Brian Taylor** | **83 min** | **USA**

Picture an idyllic suburb like any other in America. The town is filled with rows of tract houses and smiling families going about their daily lives. It's just another day, except for a random news report about a mother leaving her child in a truck on the train tracks and letting an oncoming locomotive smash into it.

Carly and Josh go about their day, dealing with school classes, texting their friends and putzing around the house. When an unknown mass psychosis goes rampant, they, along with every kid in town, end up fighting for their lives against MOM AND DAD.

The latest film from Brian Taylor (CRANK; GAMER) brings the director's signature insanity to the screen once again. This time, Taylor tackles the family dynamic and the tension of suburban existence. Not only do we get to explore the fun side of filicide, but we also get to tear down some emotional walls in this modern update of exploitation cinema. Taylor delves into a pitch black, wholly comedic look into the dark side of family life, growing up and learning that your parents aren't necessarily who you think they are.

Mad props to Anne Winters and Zackary Arthur as the children who have to strive for survival, especially since they are working alongside two amazing, well known actors. Selma Blair shines as not just an emotional anchor early on in the film, but by also bringing her own intensity home for family time. This is no small feat, as the one person that you want to see unhinged on screen — Nicolas Cage — is allowed to let his signature style fly totally free.

Pairing a judiciously unhinged script with one of the most hilarious needle drops in film this year, no child is safe in MOM AND DAD. You will never hear REO Speedwagon the same way again! (Noah Lee)

PLAYS WITH: **GIRL AT THE DOOR** [SEE PG 96]

Regional Premiere



MON MON MON MONSTERS

2017 | DIR: **Giddens Ko** | **112 min** | **Taiwan**

Bullying is a topic that will never cease to be talked about. There isn't a single society in the world where this activity is not practiced. Based on reports, Taiwan is a country where bullying is severely underestimated and where in 2013, suicide was the most common cause of death among high school and college students.

MON MON MON MONSTERS starts as a regular bullying movie with a boy, Shu-wei Lin, who is unlucky enough to have become the target of a group of "cool kids" who do everything in their power to make his life miserable. Sometimes it's little things. Sometimes it's more. As a viewer, you get angry when the higher authorities who are supposed to protect the victim end up shielding the tormentors. When Shu-wei is forcibly paired up with the bullies in an attempt to patch the relationship, the story takes a straight turn towards more insidious evil. The group is sent out to do social work with elders and the bullying extends even to those poor souls. This is where the relief comes for the boy. Asked to participate, he sees this as a desperate solution to "belong," turning into what he loathes the most.

But Giddens Ko didn't just make a film about bullies. His intent is to really show how far a human being can become a monster to stop their own suffering. Adding the fantastic element of flesh-eating creatures could have toned down the violence because if your victim isn't human and doesn't exist in real life, the bullying you undertake could be considered pure fiction. Ko brilliantly avoids this trap by involving Shu-wei in a new level of persecution and you can only suffer with the creature, now a helpless victim who has taken the place of the boy. The horror in this story isn't the creature or the bullying itself. It's how a boy who has had enough loses his humanity and goes against every principle he has for some relief from his suffering. (Annick Mahnert)



Texas Premiere

MY FRIEND DAHMER

2017 | DIR: **Marc Meyers** | **107 min** | **USA**

Filled with pathos and melancholy, MY FRIEND DAHMER is a year spent in the company of Jeffrey Dahmer, one of the most nefarious serial killers in the annals of crime.

But this story begins earlier.

This is the story of a lonely boy named Jeffrey whose parents are divorcing, whose dad forces him to change his hobbies in order to avoid the pitfalls he fell into, whose friends only hang out with him to force him into embarrassing dares, and who is full of conflicting emotions, desires and feelings that he is unable to communicate.

Featuring an incredible, mesmerising and heart-breaking performance by Ross Lynch, MY FRIEND DAHMER is an incredible adaptation of the comic book of the same name. Rather than try to focus on Dahmer's violent crimes, the film digs deeper under the skin of the teen who would become one of America's boogeymen. By looking at a character for whom a lot could have been different, MY FRIEND DAHMER reminds us that monsters are not born but shaped through encounters with the world around them. The rest of the cast gamely match up to Lynch's performance including a brilliant Anne Heche as Dahmer's equally adrift mother.

Using serial killer film tropes but turning them on their head to create an increasing sense of sad inevitability, MY FRIEND DAHMER is elegant character study at its best. Capturing a sense of small town America that resonates with every frame, the film ambles through the heartbreaking story of a boy who ended up becoming a vicious violent murderer while never resorting to cheap answers or pop psychology. By holding up a mirror to society at large, MY FRIEND DAHMER asks difficult questions of us all. And perhaps makes us give some answers that cause discomfort by suggesting the truths we'd rather avoid. (Evrim Ersoy)

CO-PRESENTED BY aGLIFF

US Premiere



THE PRINCE OF NOTHINGWOOD

2017 | DIR: **Sonia Kronlund** | **85 min** | **France / Germany**

Stories about dreamers are as old as time. But it's hard to remember the last time anyone introduced a character as brilliantly outrageous as the subject of THE PRINCE OF NOTHINGWOOD.

Meet Salim Shaheen, a one-man film industry in Afghanistan whose 110 (and counting) films are the biggest success stories of his homeland. Armed with nothing more than a camera and a group of dreamers like himself, Shaheen pushes forward endlessly to make movies. Nothing can stop him from working: not war, not mines and not even his own actors!

Filmmaker Sonia Kronlund follows Shaheen as he completes his latest opus — a movie based on his own life — and learns about how he became a filmmaker. She becomes a part of his crew. She is sometimes teased and sometimes frightened as the ragtag group makes their way through some of the most dangerous regions of Afghanistan.

And as we follow Shaheen, we follow the story of Afghanistan, a land divided by war that is still ruled by a sharp and archaic border between the equality of men and women, and is still as proud of its heritage as ever. It's a complex and thorny road that is full of uneasy questions and full of answers that might irk, but is wild and entertaining despite all that.

It's a rare pleasure to discover a film like THE PRINCE OF NOTHINGWOOD that not only serves as a brilliant character portrait but also introduces the audience so thoroughly to a region as complex as the problems it's mired in. THE PRINCE OF NOTHINGWOOD asks you to consider some difficult questions even as it entertains you. With a central cast of characters that are as unique as a unicorn, this is one hell of a ride which will leave you open to considering the Middle East through an entirely different light. (Evrim Ersoy)



US Premiere

PROFESSOR MARSTON & THE WONDER WOMEN

2017 | DIR: **Angela Robinson** | **108 min** | **USA**

In a superhero origin tale unlike any other, this film is the incredible true story of what inspired Harvard psychologist Dr. William Moulton Marston to create the iconic Wonder Woman character in the 1940s. While Marston's feminist superhero was criticized by censors for her "sexual perversity," he was keeping a secret that could have destroyed him. Marston's muses for the Wonder Woman character were his wife Elizabeth Marston and their lover Olive Byrne, two empowered women who defied convention, working with Marston on human behavior research while building a hidden life with him that rivaled the greatest of superhero disguises.

International Premiere



RABBIT

2017 | DIR: **Luke Shanahan** | **99 min** | **Australia**

Fantastic Fest thrives in shining a light on emerging filmmakers who have a distinct vision and an original voice. Luke Shanahan's premiere feature RABBIT clearly falls into this category as it boasts an electric combination of beautiful cinematography, outstanding sound design, a stellar cast and a twisted science fiction-tinged storyline that succeeds at drawing emotional depth from its characters.

Maude and Cleo are twin sisters, albeit sisters who are estranged both emotionally and via distance. Maude has left to explore her own identity away from Adelaide, refusing to see her sister staring back at her when looking into a mirror. A year after she is told that Cleo has passed away, Maude becomes possessed by vivid visions and dreams of her twin's still-breathing existence, her kidnapping by a strange group of people and being held hostage in a remote bunkhouse with seemingly malicious intent. Upon journeying home, Maude teams up with detective Henry and Cleo's partner Ralph to find her sister. Their exploration into the outback to discover the truth unlocks a darker and more sinister revelation than her visions could imagine.

RABBIT opens with a jaw dropping, beautiful and audibly stunning scene of a girl running through a forest while being chased by unknown attackers. This sets the tone for the rest of Shanahan's film, which is an intense portrait of the connections between twins as viewed through a science fiction lens and tinged with the elements of horror. The use of composer Michael Darren's near assault-like electro soundtrack both drives the darker elements of the film while maintaining an elevated tension throughout.

While the entire cast, including Alex Russell (CHRONICLE), Jonny Pasvolsky (WESTWORLD), and Veerle Baetens (THE BROKEN CIRCLE BREAKDOWN; TABULA RASA) are outstanding in their own right, it's Adelaide Clemens as twin sisters Maude and Cleo who anchors RABBIT. She is mystifying in her dual roles, displaying a meticulous range of depth in uncomfortable and poignant moments. Along with the dazzling direction from Shanahan, Clemens beautifully captures the duality and depth necessary to elevate RABBIT from a cold, basic thriller to a haunting, memorable journey and a jaw-dropping debut. (Noah Lee)



US Premiere

RADIUS

2017 | DIR: **Caroline Labrèche & Steeve Léonard** | **91 min** | **Canada**

RADIUS opens up with Liam waking up from a car crash: dazed, confused and lost. He has no memory of what happened or how he got there. Survival instinct kicking in, Liam tries to reach civilization; in this instance, any house or farm he might find. However, as he gets closer to people and wildlife, he discovers that there's a truth he is not aware of: any living being that comes within a certain radius of him will die instantly. Now his journey takes a complicated turn; he needs to not only discover what happened to him, but do so without endangering the rest of humanity.

Mixing science fiction, mystery and compassion to amazing effect, Caroline Labrèche and Steeve Léonard's inventive movie uses a unique hook to draw the audience in: the idea of a man whose radius is deadly is perhaps one of the most interesting visual cues in a long while. This is a frightening idea made even more impressive by its execution.

As Liam's journey progresses, he will run into Jane, another amnesiac, and the two of them will slowly unravel the bond they share. Setting an oppressive, isolated and melancholy mood throughout, the directors choose to explore the story with deliberate beats. Nothing feels rushed in this world which seems to be normal and yet is filled with some strange sense of menace.

Perhaps the smartest thing about this incredible feature is how it manages to avoid the common trap of not being able to take the journey and the story to a satisfying conclusion. The incredible finale brings together all the stunning character work done in an incredible gut-punch of a sequence and will leave you and the rest of the audience reeling. (Evrim Ersoy)

PLAYS WITH: **CATHERINE** [SEE PG 96]



US Premiere

REVENGE

2017 | DIR: **Coralie Fargeat** | **108 min** | **France**

Wealthy middle-aged philanderer Richard has brought his mistress Jennifer — who he believes is nothing more than a pliable bimbo — along on the hunting trip he takes each year with his old friends Stan and Dmitri. Holed up in an opulent house in the middle of the desert, accessible only via helicopter, Richard reacts violently after Jennifer threatens to tell his wife of his sexual dalliances when he refuses to support her after she's raped. This triggers a series of events that convert the quarry of the men's hunt from animal to human. As Jennifer fights to survive, her journey simultaneously reprimands both the audience and the men of the film for any regressive dismissals of her as a lollipop-sucking, sexually available airhead who was supposedly "asking for it." But the question remains: we know who is guilty of committing the rape, but who exactly is driven by the eponymous thirst for vengeance, and who is simply trying to survive?

Written and directed by French filmmaker Coralie Fargeat, REVENGE is clear evidence that her shrewd, playful engagement with genre codes and conventions demonstrated in the shorts LE TÉLÉGRAMME and REALITY+ adapt even more powerfully to a feature film context. She employs all the overt trappings and yet simultaneously subverts the assumptions we make about the notorious rape-revenge trope. Marked by a slick visual style brought to life by the extraordinary cinematography of Robrecht Heyvaert, Fargeat's fearless interrogation of sexual violence, subjectivity, agency, vengeance and survival is rendered through a broad and complex intertextual palette, spanning from LOLITA and JEM AND THE HOLOGRAMS to ancient Northern European mythology.

A story of transformation and a lesson in looking beyond our surface assumptions, REVENGE is a violent, difficult, spectacular and deeply intelligent reminder that the politics of rape-revenge films should never be taken for granted. (Alexandra Heller-Nicholas)



RIFT

2017 | DIR: **Erlingur Thoroddsen** | **111 min** | **Iceland**

Breakups affect everyone differently. Gunnar, for example, has already gotten over his ex, Einar, and moved on to a serious relationship with someone new. But Einar hasn't been able to get over the relationship as easily and a chance encounter at a party has Gunnar worried about his ex's mental state. When Gunnar is awoken by an odd phone call, he makes his excuses to his current boyfriend and heads off to check on him at the isolated vacation home that his parents own. There he finds an Einar that he's unsure how to deal with, a man who's bouncing between longing and despair with alarming frequency. Gunnar can't quite decide how to handle the situation and considers leaving, but can't quite pull himself away. He gets drawn into a complicated web when both men's fears begin to manifest as external, possibly malevolent forces.

It's rare enough to see a horror film from Iceland, but to find one centered on a homosexual relationship is truly unique. While this is only his second feature, writer/director Erlingur Thoroddsen confidently paints a picture about how our fears convince us to hide from each other and ourselves. This seemingly simple relationship drama morphs into an acute thriller that slowly increases tension and an odd sense of foreboding like a crescendo. The line between what's real and what's not becomes increasingly blurry, forcing us to question everything that we're shown. The lead actors are both sensational, allowing you to feel the love that they shared and the pain that they've clearly caused each other.

Beautifully shot almost like a postcard from or a love letter to Iceland, RIFT is a gorgeous, concentrated rumination on love and loss and the fear inherent in both. (Luke Mullen)

US Premiere



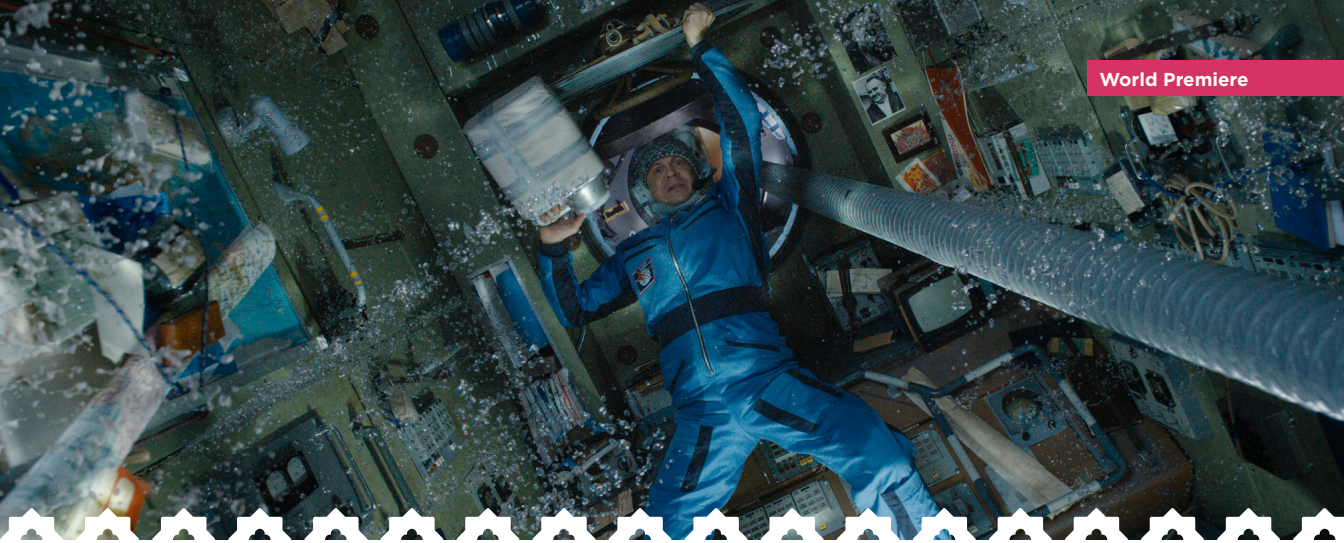
RON GOOSSENS: LOW-BUDGET STUNTMAN

2017 | DIR: **Steffen Haars & Flip van der Kuil** | **78 min** | **The Netherlands**

He's like totally shitfaced. Ron Goossens is a drunken stumbling mess who can stunt harder than anyone in Zundert. When his exploits are captured on film and uploaded to YouTube, he becomes an internet sensation. Unfortunately for Ron, his talents don't impress his lovely sexually bored wife who has taken to sleeping around with all of his friends. She decides that she won't leave if Ron can get Bo Maetern — the Netherlands' top actress and cover model — into bed. So begins Ron's journey into the world of not-so professional stuntman jobs in the burgeoning Dutch B-movie industry in an attempt to get intimate with luscious Bo and ultimately save his marriage.

RON GOOSSENS: LOW-BUDGET STUNTMAN is a lowbrow comedy wrapped in a highbrow package, which is a skill at which Steffen Haars and Flip van der Kuil excel. RON GOOSSENS is filled with hilarious action scenes that feature a badly made-up Ron double as he works on sketchily recreated films. Some of the films you may recognize. Some maybe not. It doesn't matter as it's all delightful. You'll find yourself rooting for this drunken tool, who may have more going on underneath his exterior than his never-ending depository for beer, booze and pain.

Fantastic Fest loves the team of Steffen Haars, Tim Haars and Flip Van der Kuil. When we first premiered their comedy NEW KIDS TURBO, it had our audiences roaring with laughter, as did their follow-up NEW KIDS NITRO. We had to have them back for BROS BEFORE HOS, which is a slightly more mature but still hilarious slice of whimsy. Now, we're ecstatic to have them return for RON GOOSSENS: LOW-BUDGET STUNTMAN. This raunchy, sometimes offensive, yet lovable Dutch comedy is the perfect blend of the filmmakers' previous works, bringing together the raucous insanity of the NEW KIDS films and the heart of BROS BEFORE HOS in a perfect blend of low-budget yet priceless stunts, heartfelt romance and drunken exploits. So grab some beers, avoid safety measures and get stunting! (Noah Lee)



World Premiere

SALYUT-7

2017 | DIR: **Klim Shipenko** | **119 min** | **Russia**

SALYUT-7 is based on the true story of the epic Soyuz T-13 mission, when Russia sent an expedition to the dead orbital station in order to repair it, marking the first occasion where a spacecraft docked with a moving space station. Almost a Russian response to Apollo-13, the mission has, over the years, taken on a legendary status.

SALYUT-7 takes what is already a heroic and amazing historical chapter and makes it one of the grandest missions possible by embellishing the ground crew and the cosmonauts travelling. Cypher character quirks are used to great effect in connecting the audience with these moody, determined and talented men and their impossible mission. The advantage of the story being new to most audiences also allows the tension to remain very high throughout.

But the real star of the film are the special effects. Space and its infinite, vast beauty are reflected to make us gasp and wonder while the docking sequence is one of the most mesmerising set pieces in film over the last few years. Add to it a rousing and beautiful score and you've pretty much got the perfect epic package.

Continuing Russia's claim to creating glossy, gorgeous opuses, SALYUT-7 is brilliant cinema of the most entertaining kind, a spectacle designed to be seen on the big screen that not only impresses visually but also with its very Russian heart and soul. Let yourself be immersed in the awe and wonder of SALYUT-7 and we're certain that you will not regret the journey. (Evrim Ersoy)

PLAYS WITH: **THE PASSENGER** [SEE PG 97]

US Premiere



THE SQUARE

2017 | DIR: **Ruben Östlund** | **142 min** | **Sweden**

THE SQUARE, Ruben Östlund's latest farce and follow-up to 2014's Fantastic Fest entry FORCE MAJEURE, is partially about an actual square: an exhibit at a prestigious art museum in Sweden where everyone can enter and be equal. It's where we're forced to accept each other on the terms of the social contract. It's also... well, bullshit as Östlund demonstrates through 142 minutes that range from hilarity to horror. There are limits to this tolerance and THE SQUARE spends most of its running time pushing its characters and its audience to reflect on the breaking points we have with tolerance. These are places that we've not really explored in either film or in life, and the result here proves to be as thoughtful as it is funny.

Östlund had a higher ambition for this film. FORCE MAJEURE zeroed in on the dysfunctional relationship of a married couple after the husband's faults become too much for his wife to bear. FORCE MAJEURE is certainly a more focused narrative than THE SQUARE, which almost feels episodic. That's actually refreshing because there's so much that's memorable here that the two films ultimately avoid comparison.

This feature focuses on the perfectly handsome and privileged Christian (Claes Bang, who is destined for great things), who, like the male protagonist in FORCE MAJEURE, experiences a traumatic event that's completely beyond his control and catapults him into increasingly bad decisions that reveal his true nature. It's in watching Östlund break down the main character that we get the opportunity to explore the movie's themes.

There's a lot going on in THE SQUARE, but all of it is pure entertainment. The ambition allows for Östlund to pull out some real showstoppers. THE SQUARE may shake you at times but it will leave you laughing so hard you'll be gasping for air. I was wishing it would never end. (James Emanuel Shapiro)



Regional Premiere

SUPER DARK TIMES

2017 | DIR: **Kevin Phillips** | **102 min** | **USA**

Zach, Josh, Daryl and Charlie are typical teenage boys in the mid-'90s in a small town somewhere in the United States. When not playing video games or looking at girls in their yearbooks, the boys find ways to get into trouble, like stealing marijuana and weapons from Josh's brother. When an innocent and otherwise typical excursion into the woods leads to a spat amongst friends, a single violent moment will forever change the boys' lives. How the boys in SUPER DARK TIMES choose to deal with guilt and paranoia while continuing to face the overwhelming challenges of high school, childhood friendships and girls leads to many shocking and tragic consequences.

Director Kevin Phillips and co-writers Ben Collins and Luke Piotrowski have crafted a wicked film that plays with our expectations of what a genre-laced coming-of-age story can be. Their teenagers act authentic and the fim's period setting is a clever and bold statement. These SUPER DARK TIMES are very recent: we were on the cusp of having the majority of human knowledge at our fingertips at all times and the explanation for the worst decisions we made seemed to be "boys will be boys." Evil has always found — and will continue to find — a way of corrupting without prejudice.

SUPER DARK TIMES is an anti-nostalgia film that calls bullshit on the notion that we can take some sort of comfort by recalling a not-so-long-ago period when things were simpler and life was somehow more innocent. Anchored by some truly spectacular performances by the young men at the center of the story and armed with a script heavy on character moments that help the film transition fluidly between genres, SUPER DARK TIMES maintains a palpable sense of dread from its opening moments and delivers some nasty surprises. When truly unspeakable acts of horror occur, we aren't so much shocked by the violence as we are despondent that we saw the violence coming. (Brian Kelley)



THELMA

2017 | DIR: **Joachim Trier** | **116 min** | **Norway**

Acclaimed director Joachim Trier has birthed upon the world several outstanding dramas. His feature OSLO, AUGUST 31ST was chosen for the Un Certain Regard program in Cannes. His 2015 follow-up LOUDER THAN BOMBS was selected for the Cannes main program. This year, Trier returns to the scene with another astonishing vision. THELMA is a science fiction-tinged romantic thriller that explores burgeoning love and the journey of self-discovery of a young woman in Norway.

Thelma has recently been accepted to attend university in Oslo and her new higher education is at odds with her parent's ultra-conservative religious beliefs and upbringing. They even comment to her at a particularly uncomfortable dinner how a little knowledge doesn't make her better than others. After being struck with a seizure in the school library, for which doctors have no clear explanation, Thelma begins to experience equally baffling, possibly supernatural events. Shortly thereafter, Thelma befriends a fellow student named Anja. Less emotionally bound than Thelma and beautiful in her own right, the women's connection unlocks a new romance growing inside of Thelma. As their relationship intensifies and Thelma's romantic feelings burst forth, the situation takes a dark and perplexing turn.

The film stars both Eili Harboe as Thelma, who you may recognize from the 2015 Fantastic Fest film THE WAVE, and Okay Kaya as Anja, a singer-songwriter turned actress. Harboe's doe-eyed innocence exudes a relatable and charismatic sense of wonder as she develops from her chaste existence while discovering the truth about her inner self.

Trier masterfully captures the emotional tumult of a young woman in new surroundings with a fresh take on the world, whose blooming sense of self and burgeoning sexuality are punctuated by seemingly inexplicable phenomena. This atmospheric tale from Trier tingles with electricity, powerful sexy emotions, dark thrills and shocking moments. (Noah Lee)



THOROUGHBRED

2017 | DIR: **Cory Finley** | **92 min** | **USA**

Cory Finley came in hot with his first film. With THOROUGHBRED, the writer and director has delivered a stylish psychodrama about that most vexing of subjects: teenage girls. THE WITCH's Anya Taylor-Joy and BATES MOTEL's Olivia Cooke are Lily and Amanda, two former friends who are thrown back together when Amanda's mother asks Lily to tutor her troubled daughter. There's a mysterious history between the girls, and in their teenage years they've grown apart: Lily into a posh, accomplished young woman and Amanda into a bit of a social outcast. But their new arrangement reveals that they have more in common than we might expect — neither of the girls is entirely what they seem.

Taylor-Joy and Cooke are both remarkable in THOROUGHBRED, and Lily and Amanda's profound strangeness — their cavalier approach to destruction, the deep secrets that they hide from everyone else they know — never precludes them from being very real friends to one another. Lily and Amanda's friendship might not look like any other friendship we've seen in life or on film, but it's genuine and exceptionally moving.

Finley's direction is striking and deliberate. He frames the girls so carefully against each other and their beautifully decorated backdrops. This movie is designed within an inch of its life, with a piercing, tribal score that heightens an already heightened atmosphere. THOROUGHBRED is brightly lit and colorfully hued, but the comedy is pitch black. As the narrative descends from peculiar character study to an outright horror show, we realize that THOROUGHBRED has been lulling us into complacency with its gorgeous aesthetics and hypnotic performances. Before we've noticed what's happening, things have gotten very dark. (Meredith Borders)

US Premiere



TIGER GIRL

2017 | DIR: **Jakob Lass** | **90 min** | **Germany**

After failing her tryout for the police department, Maggie signs up to train as a security guard. An average polite young girl, Maggie comes off as the kid who got upset when others didn't color inside the lines. She was born to become part of the system. But when Maggie meets Tiger, everything changes. Tiger is everything Maggie isn't, a Bohemian ass-kicker who lives in a converted bus and plays by no rules but her own. Maggie is fascinated by Tiger and her worldview, as if it had never occurred to her that people could live that way. Becoming fast friends, Maggie and Tiger set off on a series of increasingly outlandish and ultimately dangerous pranks. What starts as some relatively harmless fun quickly escalates into arbitrary violence with an extra mean streak. As Maggie realizes that Tiger's anarchy has limits and its seeming randomness has a point, the girls find their friendship in jeopardy.

Director Jakob Lass has crafted a cool aggressive take on the anti-establishment youth-in-revolt film. Casting female leads (including Ella Rumpf from last year's RAW) turns this type of story on its head and adds an extra layer to the violent pranks on display. Scenes where the leads beat up punks in the subway and force a male mall patron to strip take on new meaning with young women in control. Rumpf and Maria-Victoria Dragus play off of each other beautifully sell the subtly shifting dynamic between them. Ultimately their friendship is what really matters, even as Maggie starts to lose sight of that fact with her constant need to go further and one-up Tiger and eventually herself.

TIGER GIRL moves like a freight train with fast-paced editing and cinematography as well as a buzzing score that keeps things chugging along. There's never a dull moment here. (Luke Mullen)

PLAYS WITH: **MANILA DEATH SQUAD** [SEE PG 96]



World Premiere

TIGERS ARE NOT AFRAID

2017 | DIR: **Issa López** | **83 min** | **Mexico**

When her mother suddenly disappears leaving no one to care for her, young Estrella ends up on the street and joins a gang of children, triggering a dangerous and tragic chain of events in the third feature from Mexican filmmaker Issa Lopez.

Most films coming out of Mexico and featuring stories involving drug cartels usually take place in the world of adults. This is most likely because adults are more violent, and it's easier to set up a story in "our" world with lots of action and gunfights. Because let's face it, isn't that what we really want to see? Action and guns blazing? With one hero rising and standing in the way of the bad guys? In these types of films, rarely has a filmmaker reflected on the children that are left behind after their parents are murdered by cartels. They may not be the main targets and they're most certainly not the focus of those fighting on either side of a drug war. But these kids are victims of a world they didn't create and don't understand. They are left behind with little chance of survival and no one watching over them.

In TIGERS ARE NOT AFRAID, Issa Lopez tackles a subject of great significance, finally giving a voice to a whole generation of children who've been forgotten and abandoned by society. She manages to mix in fantastic elements with tremendous subtlety, thus elevating the story by giving it an even darker tone set alongside interesting whimsy.

TIGERS ARE NOT AFRAID is a dark, stunning fairytale told from the magical point of view of incredibly brave and unusual children. These children are no longer "out of sight, out of mind." Thanks to Lopez's remarkable work, audiences will walk out of the theater with a brand new perspective on a well-worn cinematic subgenre. (Annick Mahnert)

North American Premiere



TOP KNOT DETECTIVE

2016 | DIR: **Aaron McCann & Dominic Pearce** | **87 min** | **Australia**

As any cult film and television fan will tell you, there is no more fertile ground for the strange and bizarre than Japan. This is, after all, the land that gave us HANZO THE RAZOR, a traveling samurai who solves crimes using his very large penis, and took director Takashi Miike from shooting darts out of women's vaginas to regular appearances in the Cannes Film Festival. Japan produces more than its share of the weird. Which may explain how it is that so many have overlooked the existence of early 1990s oddity TOP KNOT DETECTIVE.

On the Japanese airwaves for two seasons, TOP KNOT DETECTIVE was an early foray into television production from multi-faceted conglomerate Suttaffu — a company with its fingers in everything from housewares to pop singers — who handed control over to the show's creator and star Takashi Takamoto. And while the results on screen were frequently bizarre, they were nothing at all compared to the true life drama playing out behind the camera.

Known in the West thanks only to a brief release in Australia, the show itself and the behind the scenes story — an epic tale of debauchery and fragile egos — are now pulled into the light thanks to a riotous documentary from filmmakers Aaron McCann and Dominic Pearce, who walk us through the entire sordid tale with access not only to Western filmmakers influenced by the madness of the original series — keep an eye open for DANGER 5's Dario Russo in there — but also with extensive interviews with the original cast and crew, who give insight to the show and the increasingly self destructive behavior of creator Takamoto.

This is a hugely entertaining look at a completely neglected talent who deserves to find an audience around the world.

It's also complete and total bullshit. (Todd Brown)



US Premiere

UNDER THE TREE

2017 | DIR: **Hafsteinn Gunnar Sigurðsson** | **89 min** | **Iceland / Denmark / Poland / Germany**

Ah, neighbors. They can be dreams or they can be nightmares. Some neighborly disputes turn to profound hate and even push people to pack up and move away. Neighboring is an art that requires strong social skills, and too few have them. In UNDER THE TREE, Hafsteinn Gunnar Sigurdsson delivers a truly acid satire about neighbor relationships, full of extremely dark comedic moments, the kind of darkness for which only Nords have the recipe.

Summer in Iceland doesn't last long, and when Atli's (Steinfflæór Hróar Steinfflæórsson) only sunny moments on the garden deck are cut short by the shadow cast by his neighbor's tree, he gets pissed. And when his seemingly nice neighbor keeps ignoring his request to trim said tree, he decides to take the matter into his own hands. Things quickly get out of control from there. Throw in some family issues, couple trouble, garden gnomes, disappearing pets and a chainsaw, and you get a savage, funny, dramatic and sad tale about four human beings who end up committing an unthinkable crime, all based on a misunderstanding.

Sure, UNDER THE TREE is pretty mean but it's also an accurate analysis of the (sad) society we live in, where people have lost the ability to care about others and have turned into selfish assholes. Sigurdsson has thrown together all his wickedly funny and painfully astute ingredients into a pressure cooker, and he's kept the heat on, and you know what happens when you just let the pressure build and build and build.... (Annick Mahnert)

International Premiere



V.I.P.

2017 | DIR: **Hoon-jung Park** | **128 min** | **South Korea**

Park Hoon-jung, writer of the deliciously violent I SAW THE DEVIL, returns with his fourth directorial feature, a raucous political tête-à-tête wrapped inside a serial killer procedural. V.I.P. takes place in chapters, each one longer than the last, and each chronicling a different facet of East Asian geopolitics through familiar iconography: men on a mission to catch a murderer... only once he's been caught, the real mystery is who gets final jurisdiction over him and why.

Park wraps his darkly violent psychological thriller within the political intrigue of bureaucratic agendas and media narratives, with key person of interest Kim Kwang-il (a silent and deadly Lee Jong-Suk) existing at the nexus of humanity and diplomacy. Hot on his trail for a multitude of political and personal reasons are Jang Dong-gun as an agent of the National Intelligence Service, fighting a battle for his very soul, Kim Myung-min and Park Hee-soon as driven police officers from the South and North willing to go beyond the call of duty, and even FARGO's Peter Stormare as a member of the CIA. Everyone wants Kim Kwang-il and he's right within their grasp, but this soft-spoken, hyper-intelligent political psychopath knows exactly how to play the game.

V.I.P. may function as political allegory, but it isn't afraid to occasionally get as messy as its ultra-brutal Korean contemporaries in murder scenes sure to make even seasoned Fantastic Fest goers wince, with an unrelenting intensity and a penchant for direct political metaphors that pay off in supremely violent fashion. Blood splatter is a regular fixture of the set and makeup design, each spray and droplet telling its own story whether spread across the four walls of a village household, or trickling quietly down the cheek of a steadfast character trying desperately to avoid unraveling.

The political, the personal and the pragmatic all rub up against one another until they eventually blur together, as even the nature of what's "right" shifts as rapidly and amorphously as the global conflicts the film echoes; current political deadlocks wearing the mask of a jet-black Korean crime caper. (Siddhant Adlakha)



US Premiere

VAMPIRE CLAY

2017 | DIR: **Soichi Umezawa** | **80 min** | **Japan**

Most fans of THE ABCs OF DEATH 2's "'Y' IS FOR YOUTH" segment — which features a vacuum cleaner made of french fries sucking a woman's hair off and then turning into a giant penis before getting really weird — probably don't recognize the name of its director. Soichi Umezawa has been working in the business steadily since the '90s, mostly doing special makeup effects on TV shows and low-budget films like ALIEN VS. NINJA. Finally getting his chance to helm a feature, Umezawa delivers an effects-laden horror film that's even more outlandish than expected.

After studying in Tokyo, Kaori returns to Aina Academy to finish her prep classes for art school. Her time away has made her a better artist than most of her classmates and she soon begins taking top scores on projects. Things begin to get strange when she finds some clay left behind by the building's previous owner and uses it for sculpting assignments. After a mishap with a razor blade and the disappearance of one of her most jealous classmates, her teacher and the other students of Aina Academy soon find themselves dealing with murderous, bloodthirsty clay.

VAMPIRE CLAY is a brilliant calling card and a ceaselessly entertaining showcase from an artist who refuses to let any limitations prevent him from practicing his craft and showing his talents on screen. Umezawa's twisted imagination has a perfect home in clay, especially when it's finding ways to consume human bodies, allowing for gory and gooey effects aplenty. Set within the confines of a small artist studio, Umezawa focuses his energy on providing ever more wild and sometimes genuinely horrific creations.

VAMPIRE CLAY is a swift and singular experience all the way through to the final images which are some of the most bizarre to ever grace a Fantastic Fest screen. (Brian Kelley)



VIDAR THE VAMPIRE

2017 | DIR: **Thomas Aske Berg & Fredrik Waldeland** | **82 min** | **Norway**

Writer/director/actor/everything Tomas Berg delivers a crazy slice of cinema with his taken on the vampire myth. Smart, offensive and entertaining, VIDAR THE VAMPIRE explodes onto the screen with more inexplicable moments than a single film can handle.

Vidar is a farmer. He tends to his duties, is a good Christian and suffers endless insults from his mother. His life is in a rut; he craves excitement. However, a chance encounter with a vampire who claims to be Jesus will mean an entirely new existence for Vidar. At first, he embraces the madcap freshness of the experience but it's not long before he begins to question whether his humdrum existence was a much better life.

Utilizing every tool he can muster, Berg creates a weird world of wonderful that astonishes and amuses in equal measure. Packing in enough visual invention to fuel an entire series, VIDAR is deeply funny in its ability to offend.

Marking Berg & Waldeland as a multi-talent duo to watch, VIDAR THE VAMPIRE is a blistering force of lo-fi brilliance that fits perfectly into the pioneering discovery spirit of Fantastic Fest. Once seen, never forgotten, do not miss a chance to meet Vidar in person. You will not regret the moment. (Evrim Ersoy)



World Premiere

WHEELMAN

2017 | DIR: **Jeremy Rush** | **82 min** | **USA**

Frank Grillo (KINGDOM; CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR) stars as the wheelman, a getaway driver thrust into a high stakes race-to-survive after a bank robbery goes terribly wrong. With a car full of money and his family on the line, the clock is ticking to figure out who double-crossed him and the only person he can trust... his thirteen-year-old daughter. All reasons to think fast and drive faster.

WHEELMAN was written and directed by Jeremy Rush. Frank Grillo, Joe Carnahan (THE GREY, THE A-TEAM), and The Solution Group's Myles Nestel (THE NOVEMBER MAN, MACHETE) serve as producers. J. Todd Harris, Chady Mattar, and Scott Silver serve as executive producers.

PLAYS WITH: **THE ACCOMPLICE** [SEE PG 96]



WIZARD

2017 | DIR: **Kagiso Lediga** | **79 min** | **South Africa**

It's New Year's Eve in Atteridgeville and Lefa's life is on the cusp of major change. Accepted into university to study botany, he's about to leave his home in a ghetto township behind if only his deadbeat father will come through with his school fees. Though he may not need his father's help at all, not with his horticultural skills and the criminal mind of his albino would-be gangster best friend, Papi. No, the easy life is on the horizon if only they can find a way to navigate the very definitely NOT easy life lying much closer to them.

Fusing African oral storytelling traditions with a Tarantino-style multi-threaded crime story with nods to Kevin Smith and Richard Linklater in its approach to youth culture, Kagiso Lediga's WIZARD is a coming-of-age crime comedy unlike any you've ever seen. The South African comic has stepped into the feature world with a pair of directorial efforts in 2017 — his debut feature CATCHING FEELINGS premiered at the LA Film Festival earlier this year as well — and the results are remarkable.

Lediga's portrayal of South African culture is a world apart from what you may expect. It is somehow light hearted and loving without glossing over the harsher realities of township living. Lediga has an obvious gift for dialogue and tone, combined with a remarkable ability to shift tone while weaving American and African influences together into something thoroughly and entirely his own.

Lediga's greatest asset, however, isn't his familiarity with genre or snappy dialogue but his rich and engaging characters. For all the bursts of violence and outrageous comedy, the strength of WIZARD lies purely with its young leads — with Lefa caught between reaching for a better life and feeling guilty about leaving friends and family behind, with the doubly outcast Papi struggling to hide his true emotions behind a façade of bluster and bravado to spare his friend — his ONLY friend — the pain of having to say goodbye. (Todd Brown)



World Premiere

WORLD OF TOMORROW EPISODE TWO: THE BURDEN OF OTHER PEOPLE'S THOUGHTS

2017 | DIR: **Don Hertzfeldt** | **40 min** | **USA**

Don Hertzfeldt is one of the most talented filmmakers working in animation today and his return to the world of Emily Prime is everything we could have ever hoped for: a brilliant, hilarious, heartbreaking journey into the future that is as complex as it is charming.

Written entirely around candid audio recordings of Hertzfeld's five year old niece, WORLD OF TOMORROW EPISODE TWO: THE BURDEN OF OTHER PEOPLE'S THOUGHTS finds Emily Prime swept into the brain of an incomplete back-up clone of her future self who is on a mission to reboot her broken mind, and what follows is an adventure of the most unbelievable kind: kaleidoscopic imagery meld into mind-bending sequences. Without spoiling any details of the wonders that occur, it's safe to say that Hertzfeld manages to merge all of this into a coherent and philosophically complex story: a story that speaks to the very nature of us and resonates on a level that's impossible to shake off.

Hertzfeld's signature style and some brilliant use of music complete this amazing experience that proves indeed that brilliant, life-changing experiences do come in small packages.

Coupled with Episode One of WORLD OF TOMORROW—in order to make sure everyone is up to speed on the journey of Emily Prime—as well as an extended Q & A with Don himself, the World Premiere of WORLD OF TOMORROW EPISODE TWO: THE BURDEN OF OTHER PEOPLE'S THOUGHTS promises to be one of the most special experiences you could hope for at Fantastic Fest. (Evrim Ersoy)

SHORT FUSE



CRESWICK

2016 • DIR: Natalie Erika James • 10 min • Australia

Creeping dread meticulously escalates to an understated but deeply unsettling coda as a father and daughter pack away the contents of their family home.



VOYEUR

2017 • DIR: Claire Stradwick & Charlotte Lam • 4 min • Canada

The private spaces of women are unnervingly encroached upon by a masculine other in this confrontational work that shifts cinema's scopophilic gaze back on to the audience.



SETACEOUS

2017 • DIR: Tel Benjamin • 11 min • Australia

An incessant car alarm attracts the curiosity of a cul-de-sac's residents with chilling consequences. A measured slice of suburban horror that implies and terrifies.



THURSDAY NIGHT

2017 • DIR: Gonçalo Almeida • 8 min • Portugal

Hypnotic cinematography buoyed by a ghostly soundscape envelops remarkable canine performances in this moody, experimental nightmare.



HIGHWAY

2016 • DIR: Vanessa Gazy • 10 min • Australia

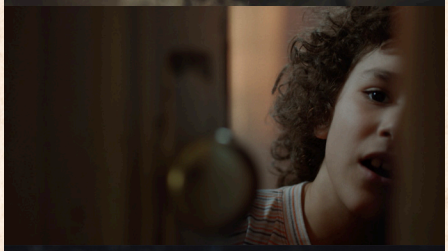
A teenage hitchhiker traverses a lonely mountain highway and begins to pick a mysterious radio broadcast rife with ominous reports of the near future.



CERULIA

2017 • DIR: Sofia Carrillo • 13 min • Mexico

The brilliant animator behind the stop-motion segments of XX spins an eerie fable about a young woman's repressed memories luring her back to her childhood home.



TOOTH FAIRY

2017 • DIR: Jeremias Segovia & Gonzalo Torrens • 6 min • Uruguay

A greedy young boy discovers that the Tooth Fairy is a stickler for the rules in this frightening permutation of the folk figure.



LATCHED

2017 • DIR: Justin Harding & Rob Brunner • 17 min • Canada

Spilt milk is nothing to cry over. But when it inadvertently awakens a voracious woodland creature, this funny and freaky short makes the case that it might be something to scream over.



EARWORM

2016 • DIR: Tara Price • 5 min • USA

When a few measures of music get stuck in a man's head, the consequences are almost as disturbing as the source of the tune.



STAY

2017 • DIR: David Mikalson • 9 min • USA

Satan sucks, but this pitch-black comedy about catching the eye of the prince of darkness is the best.



GREAT CHOICE

2017 • DIR: Robin Comisar • 7 min • USA

A woman is trapped in a Red Lobster commercial. Sublime absurdity that crescendos to nightmarish heights and with remarkable emotional resonance.

FANTASTIC SHORTS



THE NIGHT I DANCE WITH DEATH

2017 • DIR: Vincent Gibaud • 6 min • France

The consequences of saying “hell yeah, I’ll try that” at a party. A marvelously animated kaleidoscope that collides liberating euphoria with crippling anxiety.



DEAD HORSES

2016 • DIR: Marc Riba & Anna Solanas • 6 min • Spain

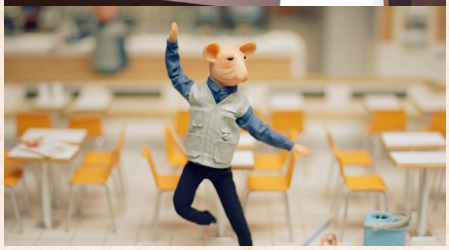
A child caught in a war zone innocently grapples to understand his horrifying surroundings in this grim stop-motion parable.



KAIJU BUNRAKU

2017 • DIR: Lucas Leyva & Jillian Mayer • 13 min • USA

The Japanese art of bunraku puppetry dramatizes the existential crisis of a despondent denizen of a Kaiju-infested region of Japan; a rigorous theatrical tradition soaked in profound absurdism.



THE BURDEN

2017 • DIR: Niki Lindroth von Bahr • 14 min • Sweden

Lonely fish, tap-dancing mice and telemarketing monkeys harmonize in their collective angst towards the apocalyptic banality of the modern age in this epic stop-motion reverie.



ANIMAL

2017 • DIR: Bahram & Bahman Ark • 15 min • Iran

A desperate man adopts the guise of a ram in a plot to penetrate a heavily guarded border crossing.



LET THEM DIE LIKE LOVERS

2017 • DIR: Jesse Atlas • 16 min • USA

Fantastic Shorts award-winner Jesse Atlas (RECORD/PLAY) returns to the section with an arresting sci-fi character study about a body-hopping assassin.



FUCKING BUNNIES

2017 • DIR: Teemu Niukkanen • 17 min • Finland

The comfortable routine of Raimo's middle class life is interrupted when a Satan-worshipping sex cult moves next door. A wickedly funny comedy of manners.



THE LAST SCHNITZEL

2016 • DIR: Ismet Kurtulus & Kaan Arici • 22 min • Denmark

The world is ending, but the president of The Grand Turkish Republic won't let that happen until he has a chicken schnitzel. Gleefully silly science fiction satire with political bite.



JUST GO!

2017 • DIR: Pavels Gumennikovs • 11 min • Latvia

Young Just may not have legs, but that doesn't prevent him from proverbially kicking ass in this remarkable slice of action inspired by the star's extraordinary life story.

SHORTS WITH LEGS



BEANS.

2017 • DIR: Maxwell Nalevansky • 7 min • USA

An acerbic narrator reflects nostalgically on the profound pleasure that was afforded to him upon once being offered a free bowl of beans.



THE VIEW FROM HERE

2017 • DIR: Sofia Bohdanowicz • 9 min • Canada

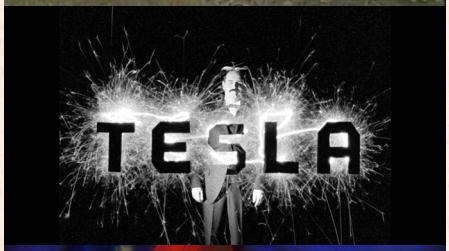
A delirious puppet-theatre libretto that depicts two lovers nostalgically yearning for the good-old-primordial-soup days of yore.



HOMER_A

2017 • DIR: Milos Mitrovic & Conor Sweeney • 10 min • Canada

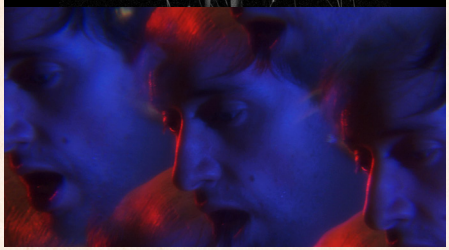
Conor Sweeney of ASTRON-6 and FF alumni Milos Mitrovic smash the characters of THE SIMPSONS with the aesthetics of TRASH HUMPERS, and the results both haunt and disturb. Ay caramba.



THE TESLA WORLD LIGHT

2017 • DIR: Matthew Rankin • 8 min • Canada

Visionary inventor Nikola Tesla makes one last appeal to his benefactor in Matthew Rankin's mesmerizing live-action/animated hybrid that paints with light itself to conjure its indelible abstract visuals.



THE CURE

2017 • DIR: Mike Olenick • 20 min • USA

A surreal sci-fi soap opera that collides the idiosyncratic private lives of both humans and aliens in a parade of hypnotic slow-zooms and kitschy feline totems.



CALL OF CUTENESS

2017 • DIR: Brenda Lien • 4 min • Germany

A parade of cat meme tributes mutate into a disturbing animated critique of how these sublime objects of cuteness belie a more sinister cycle of exploitation and control.



LA TRISTESSE DURERA TOUJOURS

2017 • DIR: Vinny De Giulio • 12 min • USA

Vinny De Ghoulie returns to Shorts With Legs with what may very well be his 8 1/2. This is a maddening deconstruction of his own process culled from the remnants of a feature film he mounted, but failed to to realize. As amusingly bemusing as it is devastating.



THE VETTING

2017 • DIR: Matthew Dunehoo • 19 min • USA

A twitchy and hysterically garish political satire in which a US senator is vetted for a Presidential nomination by a 6,000 year old telepath that secretly rules the Earth.



THE ALIENS

2017 • DIR: Alex Lee • 4 min • USA

A punk ruminates on the consequences of an alien invasion during some katana practice in the park.



MÖBIUS

2017 • DIR: Sam Kuhn • 15 min • USA / Canada

A hallucinogenic dive into the consciousness of a teenage poet in the wake of her lover's mysterious death. Exquisitely photographed and seemingly assembled in a Lynchian dreamstate.

SHORTS PAIRED



THE ACCOMPLICE

2017 • DIR: Jon Hoeg & John F. Beach • 7 min • USA

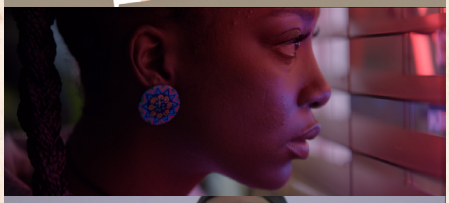
A man discovers his unwitting participation in a bank robbery across a series of increasingly incriminating (and hilarious) answering machine messages.



CATHERINE

2016 • DIR: Britt Raes • 11 min • Belgium

Delightful animation depicts the origins of a crazy cat lady, while disturbingly proving the axiom: "You always hurt the ones you love."



THE DROP-IN

2017 • DIR: Naledi Jackson • 13 min • Canada

A hairstylist confronted with her past fights to protect her future in this stylish, genre-hopping metaphor for the immigrant experience.



THE DUNDEE PROJECT

2017 • DIR: Mark Borchardt • 19 min • USA

Cult filmmaker Mark Borchardt (as seen in AMERICAN MOVIE) takes a trip to the UFO Days festival in Dundee, Wisconsin. Eccentric personalities abound as Mark poetically ruminates on why the compulsion to seek out little green men seems to converge in his home state.



THE END OF DECAY

2017 • DIR: Chris Todd • 12 min • USA

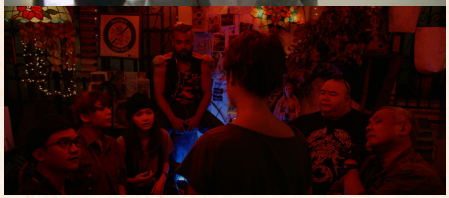
A paraplegic scientist attempts a dangerous experiment to reclaim his mobility in this visceral bit of gruesome, wince-inducing body-horror.



GIRL AT THE DOOR

2017 • DIR: Song Joo-sung • 11 min • South Korea

A young girl gleans a few choice maneuvers from gym class that enable her to turn the tables on her abusive father.



MANILA DEATH SQUAD

2017 • DIR: Dean Colin Marcial • 13 min • Philippines / USA

An ambitious journalist challenges the leader of a violent vigilante group to a high-stakes drinking game that may score her a scoop or a bullet to the head.

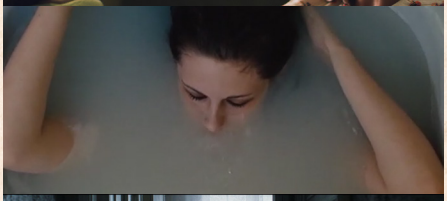
WITH FEATURES



NEONATAL

2017 • DIR: Andrew McDonald • 15 min • USA

In this tense Austin-bound thriller, an expectant mother is lured into a sinister plot by a disturbed and desperate woman.



NOTHING A LITTLE SOAP AND WATER CAN'T FIX

2017 • DIR: Jennifer Proctor • 9 min • USA

An exhaustive and illuminating deconstruction of how horror films frequently feature the bathtub as both a private sanctuary for women and, damningly, as an impromptu sarcophagus.



THE PASSENGER

2017 • DIR: Egor Abramenko • 11 min • Russia

A Russian cosmonaut grapples with post-traumatic stress following his return from orbit. But that's not all he's brought back.



UFO DAYS

2017 • DIR: Quinn Else • 9 min • USA

A fascinating fusion of documentary and fiction against the backdrop of UFO Days that juxtaposes a Ufology lecture with the rural wanderings of an enigmatic "visitor."



VIULU

2017 • DIR: Ramin Sohrab • 12 min • Finland

When a precious violin is snatched by gangsters, an ex-hitman wreaks some serious martial-vengeance in an effort to reclaim it.



YOUR DATE IS HERE

2017 • DIR: Todd Spence & Zak White • 6 min • USA

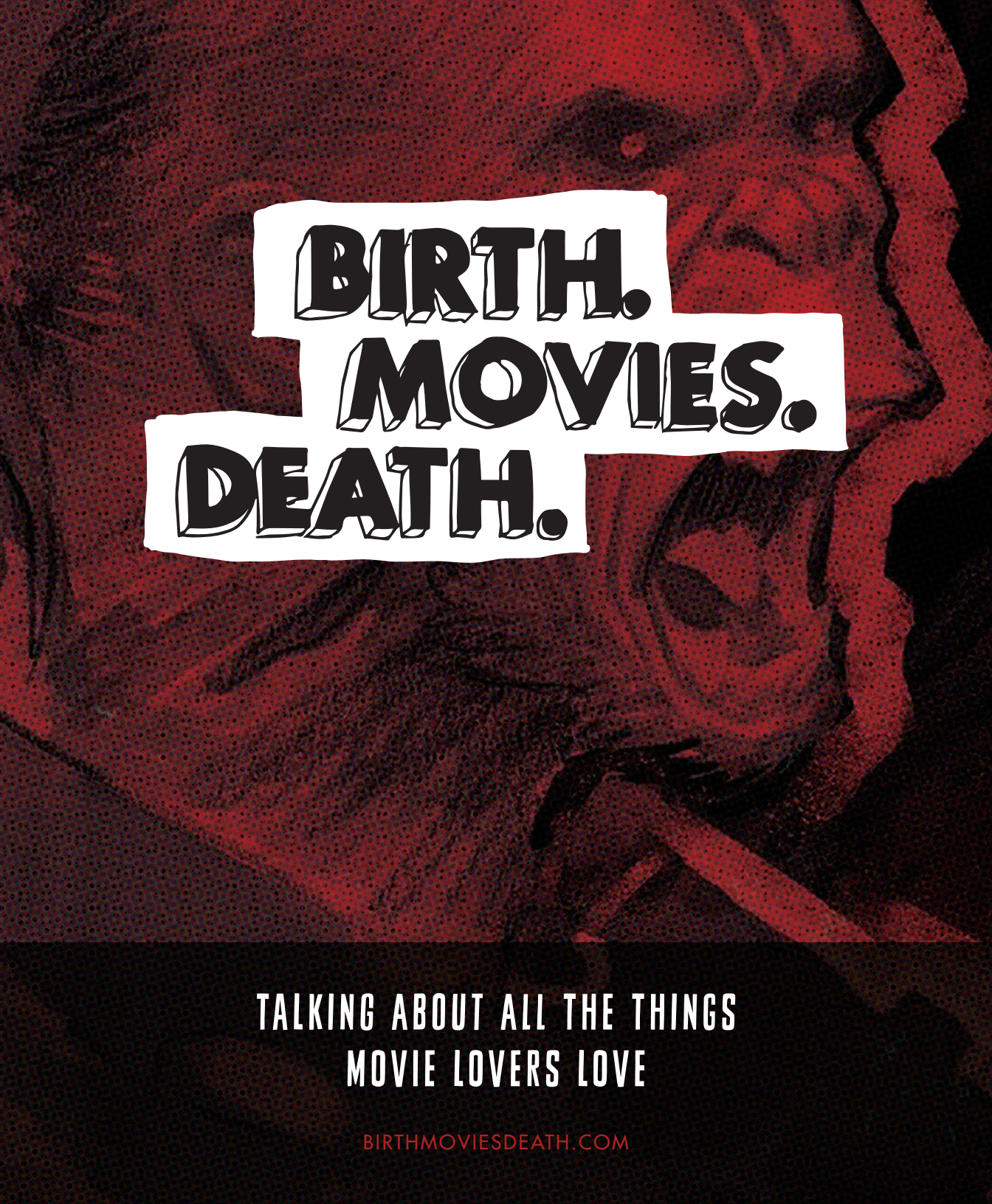
An old Mystery Date-style board game holds more evil than amusement in this expertly wound fright flick.



ZARR-DOS

2017 • DIR: Bart Wasem • 7 min • Switzerland

Two grotesque floating heads engage in an aerial waltz of wanton destruction in this spectacularly animated epic. You won't have a clue, but you'll appreciate the cosmic justice.



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